



## **Refugee and Immigrant Children's Right to Education**

### **A Comparative Analysis of Education Policies targeting Immigrant Children in the Nordic Countries**

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## Executive Summary

This report addresses how government legislation in the Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden ensure the right to primary and lower secondary education for immigrant students and how this legislation has developed since the 1980s. The focus of this report rests on the governmental obligation to ensure the right to education, based on the framework developed by Tomaševski (2001). The framework includes four dimensions of the *right to education* addressing how governments must make education *available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable*.

**Availability:** A basic premise of ensuring the right to education is making education available to all children. All four Nordic school systems are comprehensive systems building on single-structure educational organisation. The school systems are built on equal rights to education for all children and adjusted to individual needs. In Sweden and Finland, this right applies explicitly to upper secondary education for asylum seeking children, while in Denmark, asylum seeking children younger than 18 years old have a right to education but not specifically upper secondary education. In Norway, the right to upper secondary education was amended to the Education Act in 2014, to ensure the education of asylum seeking youth while they await decisions on the asylum application.

Norway and Finland have incorporated the UNCRC into national law, ensuring children's rights to education. In these two countries, children residing without legal residence have the right to education. As of July 2013, Sweden has incorporated similar rights to the Education Act. Denmark does not provide education to children with irregular migrant status.

Availability of trained, specialised teachers is crucial to ensure education for all students. International literature and policy best practice studies indicate this as crucial – measures have been taken and have increased within the past decade in all four countries, but great local variation and a need for further efforts remains. In all Nordic countries (as in many other OECD countries) teachers express a need for professional development for teaching in multicultural settings, as they face increased diversity in their schools.

In Finland teachers are required to hold a Master's degree, ensuring a high level of professionalism among teachers. Moreover, since 2011, specific

teacher training programmes have been available on multicultural education. Likewise, in Denmark, teacher training in second language education has been strengthened both in teacher education and through in-service training. In Norway, funding has been provided to develop multicultural issues across the education sector and a new strategy called Competency for Diversity was launched in 2016, which included a focus on the specific challenges related to the reception of refugee children in schools.

The Nordic school systems are decentralised, leaving significant autonomy to municipalities and local schools to organise education differently. Also, immigrant students are unevenly distributed geographically (within the countries and within larger cities) and the challenges and opportunities of immigrant education differ across schools. At state level, knowledge sharing and capacity building at local schools are priorities.

**Accessibility:** To ensure the right to education, governments are obliged to secure access to education for all children at compulsory school age. In Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, primary and lower secondary schooling is offered to all children in public schools based on catchment area policies, meaning that students as a basic principle are ensured schooling at a school in their local neighbourhood. Although this model ensures the basic right to an available school, in such catchment area models, school composition reflects a *de facto* socio-demographic segregation in housing.

All countries have free school choice, but in practice, the freedom of choice is not accessible to all. This is due to over-subscription of high-quality schools, lack of socio-economic resources and/or lack of knowledge of the school system among some immigrant families, not least those who have recently arrived.

Due to the decentralised organisation of Nordic education systems, most policy measures regarding school choice and school composition are left to the local authorities. In Denmark, however, an exception to the legislation on free school choice was made in 2005, allowing schools to deny bilingual children the free choice of school if they do not speak Danish at a sufficient level.

Offering high-quality *early childhood education*, tailored to language development, is an immedi-



ate policy response to ensure equal access to basic schooling. All Nordic countries offer early childhood education and care, including the provision of partial or fully subsidised fees. Hence, the required policy measures raise the question of how to encourage parents to accept offers of early education and care. Norway in particular has emphasised early education as part of their policy measures on immigrant education, introducing the *Equal Education in Practice* strategy in 2003 to ensure greater participation of immigrants already in Kindergarten, for example, through parental guidance. Sweden has introduced similar efforts. Moreover, both Norway and Denmark have introduced language screening for pre-school children.

*Transition into upper-secondary education:* In comprehensive schools, none of the Nordic compulsory education systems use early ability tracking. When transitioning into upper secondary education, students in all countries follow either a general (more theoretically oriented) or a vocational programme. Reflecting international tendencies, immigrant students tend to choose the vocational tracks in upper-secondary education to a higher degree than non-immigrant students..

Asylum seeking children have a legal right to education in the Nordic countries. In Sweden and Finland, the right applies to pre-school, compulsory and upper secondary education on the same conditions as all other children and young people in the country. In Norway, the right to upper secondary education for asylum seekers aged 16-18 was amended in the Education Act in 2014, while asylum seekers in Denmark do not have the same right to upper secondary education. In Denmark, children/young people who are 17 years old and younger are offered education equivalent to compulsory, public schooling, while young people who have turned 18 have the obligation and right to participate in education and training courses equivalent to adult asylum seekers.

Regarding access to upper secondary education, challenges for asylum-seekers also concern their qualifications because many have limited lower secondary education, or lack documentation of such education and, therefore, do not qualify for admission to upper secondary schools.

**Acceptability:** The quality of education is crucial to maintain the right to education: governments are not only obliged to make education available and accessible, but are also urged to keep education acceptable. The minimal standards concern safety and healthy school environments, while another impor-

tant aspect is the language of instruction. Education must be performed in an understandable manner in order to be acceptable. Regarding policy issues on migrant education, this poses the challenge of balancing education taught in languages that students already know (e.g. mother tongues) and/or the language they are required to know in their residing country.

In all four Nordic countries, environmental safety is a basic right stipulated by the Education Act in each country. Denmark (since 2001) and Norway (since 2015) have a specific legislation on educational environment.

The organisational models of introductory programmes for newly arrived immigrant students constitute a key policy area in all Nordic countries. During the past decades, all countries have developed national policies with increased attention since 2010. All countries set the objective that newly arrived immigrant students must be integrated into general school classrooms as soon as they hold the skills to participate in regular education. Finland and Sweden specifically emphasise early mainstreaming in their national policies.

In the Nordic decentralised school systems, concrete measures (in policy and practice) to ensure education for newly arrived students are primarily carried out in municipal contexts. Here, the option of taking an organisational model based on either inclusion (mainstreaming) or separation (introduction/transitional classes) remains open to local, municipal decision making.

A significant difference between Denmark and the other Nordic countries is the perception and provision of mother-tongue education. In Denmark, since 2002, the right to mother tongue language education applies only to students from the EU, EEA, Faroe Islands and Greenland, while mother tongue education remains a central right in the rest of the Nordic countries. Moreover, in Finland, Norway and Sweden, mother tongue education is not only considered essential to general education and language learning, but is also conceived of as an important aspect of identity development and social and psychological wellbeing.

Assessment and monitoring of immigrant education in the Nordic countries is carried out by comparative measures on performance, participation, access and school wellbeing. The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows significant performance gaps in the Nordic countries between non-immigrants and

immigrants (first and second generation). However, evidence-based knowledge remains limited on the performance of immigrant students, considering different categories of immigrants, including asylum seekers and refugees (accompanied and unaccompanied children).

**Adaptability:** To always refer to the best interest of the individual child (UNCRC) underlines the need for educational systems to become and remain adaptable, that is, education must adapt to each individual child. All the Nordic countries, in various wordings, base their educational objectives on the basic premise of ensuring equal education to all adapted to individual needs.

The Nordic school systems build on principles of inclusive schooling stipulated in basic educational policy. Accordingly, to the extent possible, all children must receive the same education, adjusted to their specific needs. Research argues that an essential problem in assessing a student's need for special-needs education is to distinguish between children who have a need for linguistic support and children who have special-education needs.

The Finnish education system embraces multi-cultural discourse to the highest degree by officially setting goals to accommodate linguistic, ethnic and cultural student diversity; for example, with the youth policy programme (2006) that focuses on diversity, children's right to own culture and language, global responsibility and tolerance, cultural identity and internationality. All Nordic countries have policies to act against discrimination of any kind.

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# 1. The role of education in immigrant integration in the Nordic Welfare context

Increasing immigration constitutes a specific and important task for the educational systems in the Nordic countries. Not least in the light of the recent influx of refugees, including many children and young people. Overall, education can be considered as a gateway to successful integration and a productive life for younger refugees and the second generation. A broad consensus exists that education is crucial to societal participation, health and wellbeing and that school plays a critical role for newly arrived refugees (Allen 2006; Pastoor 2012, 2013; Pinson and Arnot 2010; Rutter 2006) and refugee children's wellbeing depends highly on their school experiences (Hek 2005; Nilsson and Bunar 2016, 400; Pastoor 2015, 2016). Thus, how education systems respond to immigration has a major impact both on whether immigrants are successfully integrated into their host communities and on the economic and social well-being of all members of the communities (OECD 2015a).

Education has been a recognised human right since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Education has also been adapted into the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), emphasising the right of the child to an education based on equal opportunity. According to UNCRC, state parties must ensure that primary and secondary education is free, available and accessible to all, and take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and reduce drop-out rates (UNCRC Article 28). Although only Finland and Norway have incorporated the UNCRC into national law, all Nordic countries have ratified the convention. Also, in line with the Nordic social democratic welfare model (Esping-Andersen 1996), education plays a key role in the welfare system. Here, free education for all children regardless of social background aims to ensure equality, justice and social cohesion.

Thus, the Nordic school systems are based on equal access and the right for all children to receive education (as well as being based on the obligation to participate in compulsory education). Accordingly, educational policy constitutes a key instrument of the welfare state in as far as it aims to counteract the mechanisms leading to and perpetuating socio-economic inequities and to improve the employment prospects of youth in a life course perspective. Regarding young refugees and immigrants, educational policy must address both the initial introduction into

schooling through introductory or transitional programmes and on-going educational support to facilitate integration, wellbeing, academic outcomes and entry into the labour market.

This report addresses how government legislation in the Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden ensures the right to primary and lower secondary education for refugee and (im)migrant education, and how this legislation has developed since the 1980s. Through a comparative analysis of these four Nordic countries' education policies, the report addresses the right to education looking at the *availability*, *accessibility*, *acceptability* and *adaptability* of primary and secondary education to immigrant students both upon arrival in the country and through on-going educational support.

## 1.1 Definitions

Educational policy is determined to be a part of general societal policy, the aim of which is to take care of the educational needs of the population and society. Governmental educational authorities have a responsibility to monitor and oversee the division/delivery of education (Lehtisalo & Raivola 1999, 31).

The education policies in the Nordic (and other European countries) rarely target refugee and asylum-seeking children specifically (Pastoor, 2016). Apart from specific initiatives within asylumseeking facilities, the education policies use terminology such as 'newcomer', 'immigrant' or 'bilingual'. While this various terminology is applied when context requires, the present report uses a general terminology drawing on the definition used by the OECD/PISA classifying students into the following categories:

**Refugee** refers to the beneficiaries of international protection according to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, while **asylum-seeker** refers to immigrants who have applied for refugee status and are awaiting a decision.

**Students with immigrant backgrounds** are students whose mother and father were both born in another country than the country of residence, including:

**First-generation immigrant students** are students who were born outside the country of residence and whose parents were born outside the country of residence.

■ **Second-generation immigrant students** are students who were born in the country of residence to parents who have immigrated, which means that they have followed early childcare and education in the institutional system of the country of residence.

Non-immigrant students are students whose mother and/or father was/were born in the country of residence.

OECD (2016) *PISA 2015 Results (Volume I): Excellence and Equity in Education*. PISA, OECD Publishing: Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en>

OECD (2015a) *Immigrant Students at School: Easing the Journey towards Integration*. OECD Publishing: Paris.

OECD (2010) *OECD Reviews of Migrant Education. Closing the Gap for Immigrant Students: Policies, practice and performance*. OECD Publishing: Paris (including country reviews on Denmark, Norway and Sweden and background reports on Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden)

Nonchev, A. and Tagarov, N. (2012) *Integrating refugee and asylum-seeking children in the educational systems of EU member states*. INTEGRACE. Center for the Study of Democracy and the INTEGRACE Project Partners.

## 1.2 Aims and methods

The purpose of this comparative policy analysis is to describe, analyse and compare educational policies targeting refugee and immigrant students in the Nordic countries. We focus on primary and lower secondary education, that is, the compulsory education period (from 6 to 16 years), as well as upper-secondary education (16-19 years of age). The research questions are:

1. What are the main laws and policies affecting refugee and immigrant children and young people in the public-school system (primary and secondary)?
2. What are the main similarities and differences comparing the Nordic policies affecting refugee and immigrant children and young people in the public school system (primary and secondary)?
3. What are documented effects of these laws and policies, as stated in existing evaluations and research?

The secondary data collected for this study included the main government tools used to address first and second generation immigrant students, and where it is explicitly mentioned in the policy texts, refugees. The data includes laws, policies, government proposals, evaluations, research reports and, where relevant, statistics. Moreover, the report draws on central overviews, evaluations and policy reports produced in the field of European migrant education (see box below).

Educational policies targeting refugees and migrants have different yet complementary objectives; some programmes aim specifically at establishing introductory courses/classes, while others seek to ensure on-going educational support to facilitate integration, wellbeing, academic outcomes and entry into the labour market. Accordingly, the analysis of main laws and policies affecting refugee and immigrant children and young people in the public-school system focuses on two policy areas with relevance for immigrant and ethnic minority students:

- a. **Introduction into the educational system** for newly-arrived resettled refugee and immigrant students.
- b. **On-going educational support** for refugee and immigrant students.

Given that migrant education policy is built around a complex interaction of various policy tools, the material gathered for the study is wide ranging and includes policies that, while not targeting migrant students, may have a significant impact (intended or unintended) on migrant students' educational trajectories.

### 1.2.1 Analytical framework

Education has a twofold purpose of both providing the individual person and citizen with safety, social connection and integration into society, and contributing to economic growth by producing human capital. Education is, in other words, crucial to both individuals and society (Arnesen and Lundahl 2006, 286). Keeping this dual purpose in mind, the focus of this report rests on the governmental obligation to ensure the right to education, based on the framework developed by Tomaš evski (2001), UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education. The framework includes four dimensions of the right to education, addressing how governments must make education

available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable (see 4-A scheme below). Applying this framework in the present study allows us to consider the various dimensions of each country's policy response to ensure equity in education for all.

The Right to Education, 4-A scheme	
AVAILABILITY	Free compulsory education for all children Adequate infrastructure exists Trained teachers are available to support education delivery
ACCESSIBILITY	Compulsory schooling The school system is all-encompassing and non-discriminatory Schooling is accessible to all and measures are taken to include the marginalised Parents have free choice of school for their children Post-compulsory schooling Non-discriminatory criteria for admission Preferential access Foreign skills/diplomas are recognised
ACCEPTABILITY	Quality of educational content is acceptable The education available and accessible is of good quality Education is relevant, non-discriminatory and culturally appropriate (e.g. regarding language of instruction); the teachers are professional The school environment is safe (physical and psycho-social)
ADAPTABILITY	Education should respond and adapt to the best interest of each child (cf. UNCRC) The education is adaptable to local and specific context The educational system meets diverse and changing needs (e.g. regarding language minority children) The educational system challenges inequalities (e.g. discrimination)

The report addresses these four dimensions for each country separately, focusing on the current educational rights while describing the overall legislative developments regarding migrant education in the country in question. Based on the country descriptions, the comparative analysis addresses differences and similarities between countries, discussing the Right to Education in these Nordic countries and addressing the overall governmental policy measures of migrant education to ensure successful education and societal integration.





## 2. Background: Immigration policies, refugees and educational outcomes

This chapter provides background information on economic development, political context, immigration patterns and educational outcomes of children and youth with immigrant backgrounds in the Nordic countries. All graphs are included in the appendices of the report.

### 2.1 Economic and political context

In Scandinavia, the welfare state societies and their governance are built around a series of common values, among which 'equity' features prominently. Goals of equity in education are inclusion and fairness. Inclusion means that students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to high quality education and reach a baseline level of skills to act in society. Fairness means that an education system removes economic and social obstacles to the pupil's full development of talent, such as unequal access to educational resources in their family (OECD 2015e, 2016).

Since the 1970s, Scandinavian countries have managed to reduce income inequity, while enjoying economic growth (Mogensen, 2010). Theoretically, societal categories such as class, gender, ethnicity, age, religion and sexual orientation play no role in the equitable distribution of rights and entitlements, if individuals fulfil their responsibilities as citizens.

While this is still true compared to many other countries, the reputation of the 'Nordic model' has to a certain extent been challenged by recent reports of a declining welfare state and growing social inequality (Kananen, 2012). Education is a key instrument of the welfare system, meant to prevent unemployment and social exclusion while ensuring participation of all citizens. Hence, the educational system is also affected by the developments within the neo-liberal waves since the 1980s. Accordingly, education policies have increasingly been influenced by market logic and economic motives with ideas of completion and focus on achievement being added to ideologies of equality and social cohesion (Arnesen and Lundahl 2006).

While the civilising role of education, emphasising citizenship, social integration and national unity, was strong during the post-Second-World-War period, during the 1960s education came to be considered increasingly essential for economic growth and the

production of human capital. In all Nordic countries, this was led by a central state governing the comprehensive educational system (Telhaug et al. 2004). In the 1990s a radical transformation of educational governance took place, including decentralisation, deregulation and marketisation (Arnesen and Lundahl 2006; Lundahl 2005), shaping the decentralised Nordic school systems of today, leaving municipalities and schools to a large extent both free and responsible to set targets and develop educational frameworks. The decentralised governing of education in the Nordic school systems plays a crucial role in the integration of immigrant students, as significant authority and autonomy in taking educational development decisions is rendered to local authorities and schools. Hence, municipalities and schools in the Nordic countries have individualised and flexible approaches to integrating immigrants in schools.

Politically, the time since the 1980s has been characterised by altering governments led by social democratic and liberal-conservative prime ministers. Also, the distinction between traditionally left-wing and right-wing political parties has become vaguer as a consequence of third way social democracy, political triangulation and broad parliamentary acceptance of economic liberalism, privatisations and financial deregulation (Surender and Lewis, 2004). Another trend is the rise and increasing political impact of far right-wing populist and/or nationalist anti-immigration parties in all the Nordic countries.

### 2.2 Migration and integration policies in the Nordic Welfare States

Immigration and integration policies have existed in the Nordic countries since the 1970s. Sweden was the first of the four countries to develop an explicit integration policy (1974). Denmark followed in 1998, Finland in 1999 and Norway in 2004.

Since 2000, the differences between the Nordic countries' immigration and integration policies have grown (Brochmann and Hagelund, 2012). Overall, Sweden has the most liberal immigration and integration policy, while Denmark has emphasised more stringent immigration policies since 2001. In 2002, Denmark introduced an immigration policy that comprised a considerable tightening of its immigration rules (a limitation on family reunions and more strin-

gent rules on permanent residency and citizenship). Since then, Danish immigration legislation has been tightened repeatedly. Norway and Finland fall somewhere in between the Swedish and Danish integration and immigration policies. A common feature of the countries' contemporary policies is their attention to rights and obligations, but with differing emphasis as Sweden and Finland focus more on rights, Denmark on obligations and Norway somewhere in between (Bevelander et al. 2013, 19).

When it comes to the development of introductory programmes for newcomers, a common feature among the countries is that elements such as employment and education have become increasingly pronounced, meaning that employment and the ability of immigrants to sustain themselves have become more important (Djuve and Kavli, 2007). Although the focus of the programmes is the same in the four countries, an important difference is that Finland, Norway and Denmark's introduction programmes are compulsory and linked to economic benefits, whereas in Sweden the introduction programme is voluntary.

While the Nordic region has become more diverse in terms of demography, workforces and cultural practices, criticism of and resistance towards multicultural politics have increased. Although immigration and integration policies differ in the Nordic countries, they all share growing political tensions regarding multiculturalism and immigration.

### 2.2.1 Migration to the Nordic countries

Until the early 1970s, employment was the main reason for migration to the Nordic countries with a considerable proportion of the total migration taking place between Nordic countries, e.g. from Finland to Sweden. Hereafter, family reunification and humanitarian grounds constituted the main causes for immigration until the eastward expansion of the EU in 2004. Since then, labour migration, particularly from Poland and the Baltic states, has dominated the

immigration situation in the Nordic countries, along with continued family reunification and people seeking asylum.

On-going wars and conflicts in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa since the 1980s have caused steady and high migration rates from these regions to the Nordic countries, whereas migrations from Chile in the 1970s and the Balkan region in the 1990s were temporary phenomena. The Nordic countries have recently experienced the highest migration rates in their modern history, with the largest groups of asylum seekers and refugees coming from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea and Somalia (Appendix A, fig 1-2).

The numbers of asylum seekers soared in 2015 in all the Nordic countries; relative to population size, Sweden, Norway and Finland were among the top five receivers of refugees in Europe. In response to this growing influx of refugees, the Nordic governments tightened their asylum policies from autumn 2015 – restricting family reunion, curtailing duration of residence and cutting benefits.

The number of asylum applications by unaccompanied (refugee) minors has been relatively small until recently when the number of unaccompanied refugee children increased significantly (Appendix A, fig 3).

### 2.3 Immigrant children and educational outcomes in the Nordic education systems

Table 1 below shows the percentage of students with immigrant backgrounds in the Nordic countries. Sweden has the highest share of students with immigrant backgrounds, while relatively few students in Finland have immigrant origins.

A significant difference between the countries is the share of first- and second-generation immigrants. Denmark stands out with relatively more second-generation than first-generation immigrant students. In Finland, on the other hand, the share

Table 1. Percentage of students with immigrant background in education in 2015

%	1st generation	2nd generation	Immigrant background (total)
Denmark	2,8	7,9	10,7
Finland	2,8	1,2	4
Norway	6,1	6,0	12,1
Sweden	7,6	9,8	17,4

(OECD 2016. Table 1.7.1 / PISA Etnisk 2015 Greve and Krassel 2017)

of first-generation immigrant students is higher than second-generation. A Danish report on the PISA 2015 shows that, between 2006 and 2015, the percentage of immigrant students increased in all Nordic countries. While an increase in second-generation immigrant students is visible in all countries, Denmark stands out with a decrease from 3,4 to 2,8 per cent first-generation immigrant students (Greve and Krassel 2017, fig. 2.2, 2.3, 2.4).

### 2.3.1 Educational performance

Looking at educational outcomes in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, we find poorer education performance outcomes among children with immigrant backgrounds than non-immigrant backgrounds. Appendix B shows diagrams of performance scores in mathematics, reading and science of non-immigrants, first-generation-immigrants and second-generation immigrants in each country. In all countries, performance level is lowest for first-generation immigrants. In an international perspective, all countries' non-immigrant students are above the OECD average score in science (2015), while both first- and second-generation students perform below the OECD average in science.

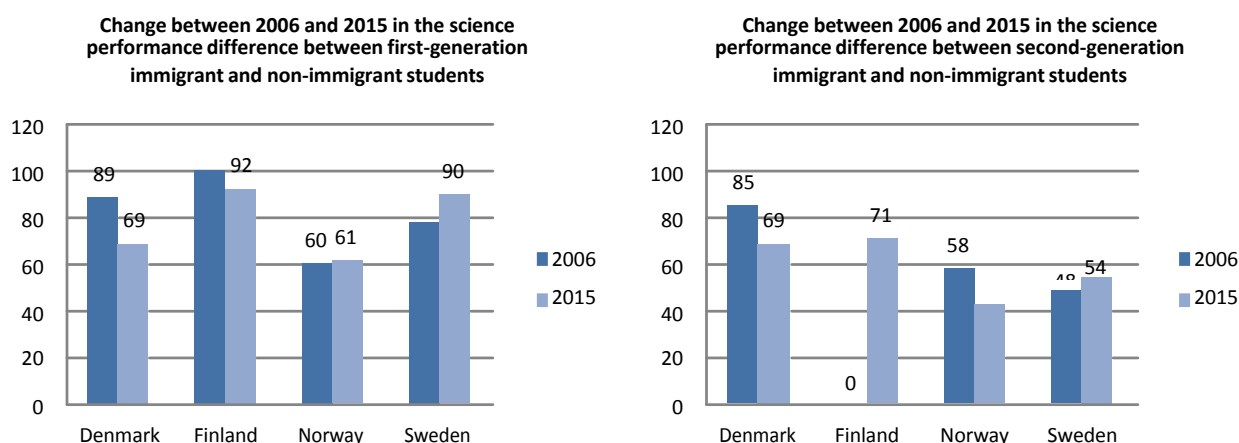
Table 2. OECD average science performance score in 2015.

2015 PISA Science immigrant Score	Non-immigrant	First-generation immigrant	Second-generation
Denmark	510	441	441
Finland	535	443	464
Norway	507	446	464
Sweden	508	417	454
OECD	500	447	469

In Figure 1 below, we see the change in the science performance gap (i.e. the average difference in performance score between non-immigrants and first- and second-generation immigrants respectively) between 2006 and 2015. In Denmark, we see a reduction in the performance gap for both first- and second-generation immigrant students, while the performance gap between both first- and second-generation students in Sweden increased between 2006 and 2015. In Norway, only the performance gap between non-immigrants and second-generation immigrants has improved.

Finland has, over the past decade, been in the top tier of countries in PISA assessments. However, significant differences in educational outcomes stand out. Even though Finland remains among the EU top performers, its overall performance has worsened, particularly with increasing differences in learning outcomes between students. Some researchers suggest that these results are related to the fact that Finnish society is becoming more heterogeneous (EC 2016).

Fig 1 Change in performance gap between non-immigrant and immigrant students.



Performance levels are closely associated with socio-economic status. Past PISA results have also shown that the lower average performance of immigrant students compared with that of non-immigrant students is associated with other factors such as language barriers, language spoken at home, the concentration of disadvantage in the schools in which many immigrant students are enrolled, and stratification policies that result in different opportunities for learning (OECD 2016; OECD, 2015a). Furthermore, there are substantial differences between educating refugees and other migrants, as the experiences of refugees are most often distinct from those of migrants (Pastoor 2016). Nevertheless, Figure 2 based on PISA results from 2015 shows that performance gaps are reduced but remain significant in all Nordic countries after adjustments for socio-economic background. Figure 2 also shows that the performance difference between non-immigrants and both first- and second-generation immigrants in the Nordic countries is larger than the average performance gap in OECD countries.

The latest PISA results show that on average across OECD countries, immigrant students who speak the language of assessment at home score more than 20 points higher in science than immigrant students who mainly speak another language in the family context (OECD 2016, Table 1.7.8a).

Low performance among immigrant students has also been associated with the fact that these students are often concentrated in disadvantaged schools. Immigrant students tend to be over-represented in certain schools, sometimes because they live in the same neighbourhoods, but in other cases also because school systems group them together regardless of their place of residence. The concentration of immigrant students in schools does not automatically

have adverse effects on student performance or social integration and, overall, PISA results mirror previous evidence which suggests that it is the concentration of disadvantage, and not the concentration of immigrants per se, that has detrimental effects on learning (OECD 2016, 256).

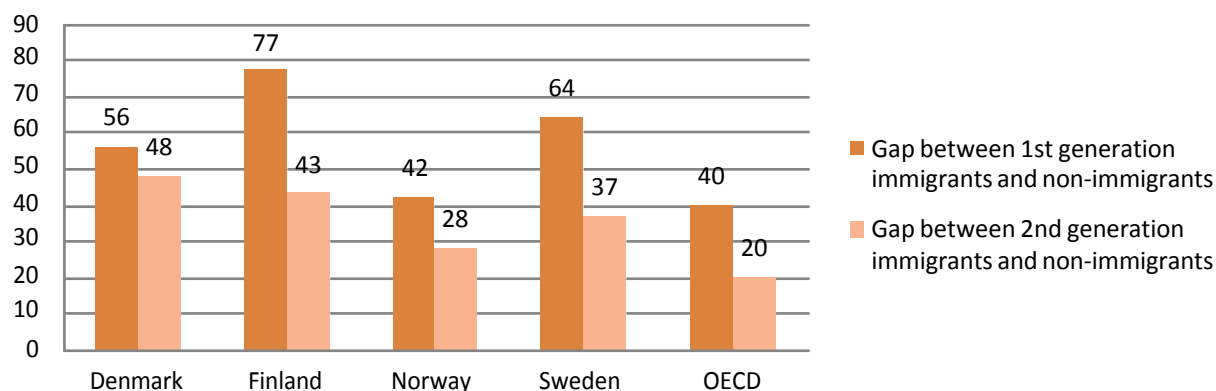
### 2.3.2 Educational participation

Early childhood education proves beneficial for children with immigrant backgrounds, and entering early education programmes can improve the chances that immigrant students start school at the same level as non-immigrant children. Among children of comparable socio-economic backgrounds, those who attend preschool in their current OECD host country obtain better reading literacy results at 15 years old than those who do not (OECD/EU 2015). Thus, offering high-quality early childhood education, tailored to language development, is an obvious policy response to ensure equal access to primary schooling.

Across the OECD, an average of 69 per cent of 3-6-year-old immigrant children were enrolled in early childhood education programmes in 2012 – an attendance rate that was 8 percentage points lower than among their non-immigrant peers. Figure 3 below shows that Denmark and Sweden have the highest attendance rates for both immigrant and non-immigrant children in early childhood education and that Norway is the only Nordic country with an attendance rate below OECD average for immigrant children.

Participation in post-compulsory education is another indicator of the accessibility of education for immigrant and non-immigrant students. Comparable numbers are limited showing the participation levels

Fig 2 PISA Performance difference in Science for 15-year-olds students in Nordic countries 2015, adjusted for socio-economic background.



(OECD 2016, Table 1.7.4)

of immigrant students in upper secondary education. However, we find similar patterns of participation in all four countries (see table 3 below): that immigrant students, to a higher degree than non-immigrant students, tend to choose vocational training pro-

grammes over general upper secondary education and that immigrant students have higher drop-out rates than non-immigrant students.

Table 3. **Patterns of participation in upper secondary education in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.**

	<b>Upper secondary education: General upper secondary education or vocational education and training (VET)</b>	<b>Drop-out / completion rates</b>
<b>Denmark<sup>1</sup></b>	88% of immigrants who finished compulsory school in 2005 had enrolled in upper secondary education six years later. For non-immigrants and second-generation immigrants, the proportions were 95% and 93%, respectively. Of these, 49% of immigrants were enrolled in a general programme compared with 62% of non-immigrants and 58% of second-generation immigrants. 47% of immigrants attended VET compared with 36% of non-immigrants and 39% of second-generation immigrants.	Of the students who finished compulsory school in 2005, 13% of immigrants enrolled in the general programme had not completed the programme seven years later. For those enrolled in VET, 62% had not completed after the same time span. For non-immigrants, the rates were 9% (general programme) and 42% (VET) while for second-generation immigrants they were 11% (general programme) and 59% (VET).
<b>Finland<sup>2</sup></b>	95 % of immigrant students applied for studies in upper secondary (both general and VET) education in the year 2004. This is about the same share as for native students. 34 % of immigrant students and 55 % of nonimmigrants applied for general upper secondary education. In 2014, 85 % of young people with immigrant backgrounds (aged 18-24 years) studied at upper secondary level or had finalised their studies in upper secondary, compared to 94% of nonimmigrants (Larja et al 2015).	18-24 year olds in 2014: early leavers from education and training (only basic education) included 14% of foreign origin (18 % for boys and 11% for girls), compared to 7% of those from the host population (8% and 4 % respectively). NEET is more common among foreign origin 15-29 year olds: 15 % vs. 11 % among those from the host population (female foreign origin was 19% vs. 10 % male) (Larja et al 2015).
<b>Norway<sup>3</sup></b>	72% of immigrants aged 16-18 and 25% of immigrants aged 19-21 enrolled in upper secondary education in 2013. 45% attended general upper secondary education while 55% attended VET. By comparison, 70% of second-generation immigrants attended a general programme while 30% were enrolled in VET. Nonimmigrants were represented more equally in both programmes, at about 50% in each. (Egge-Hoveid & Sandnes 2015)	Dropout rates are higher in upper secondary vocational programmes and particularly high for first-generation immigrant students: 45% of first-generation immigrant students who entered upper secondary vocational programmes in 2001 had dropped out five years later, compared to 28% of native students and 30% of second-generation immigrant students (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2008). In vocational programmes in 2006, only 47% of first-generation immigrant students had either gained a qualification or were still enrolled in a programme after five years compared to 66% of their native peers. In 2013, about 28% of immigrants who enrolled in upper secondary education five years earlier had dropped out. This was the case for about 15% of second-generation immigrants and about 16% of non-immigrants.
<b>Sweden<sup>4</sup></b>	In 2007/08, 23% of all students with immigrant backgrounds who finished compulsory education were not qualified to continue onto a national upper secondary programme, compared to only 9% of their non-immigrant peers. Individual programmes are available for students who are not eligible for a national programme in upper secondary education. Individual programmes are primarily supposed to prepare students for studies in a national programme. In 2006/07, 94% of youth (16-18 years old) with non-immigrant backgrounds were enrolled in upper secondary schools, while 82% of first-generation immigrants participated in upper secondary education.	59.7% of immigrant students completed their school with a leaving certificate, compared to 78.2 % nonimmigrant students.

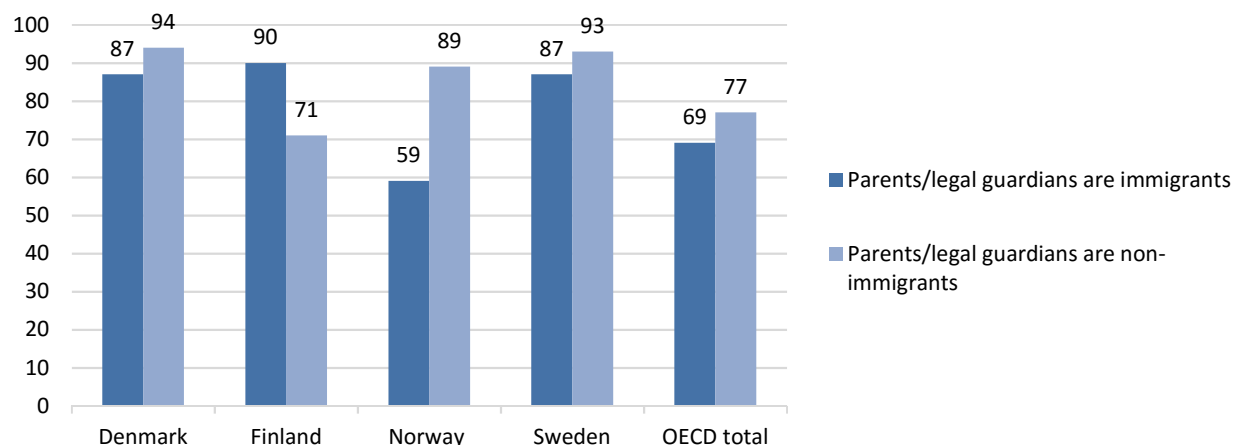
1 See Jakobsen 2015 (SFI)

2 See Finnish Ministry of Education/OECD 2009.

3 See Taguma et al. 2009.

4 See Taguma et al. 2010.

Fig 3 Attendance rate in early childhood education (age 3-6 years), 2012, OECD/European Union (2015), Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In, OECD Publishing, Paris.



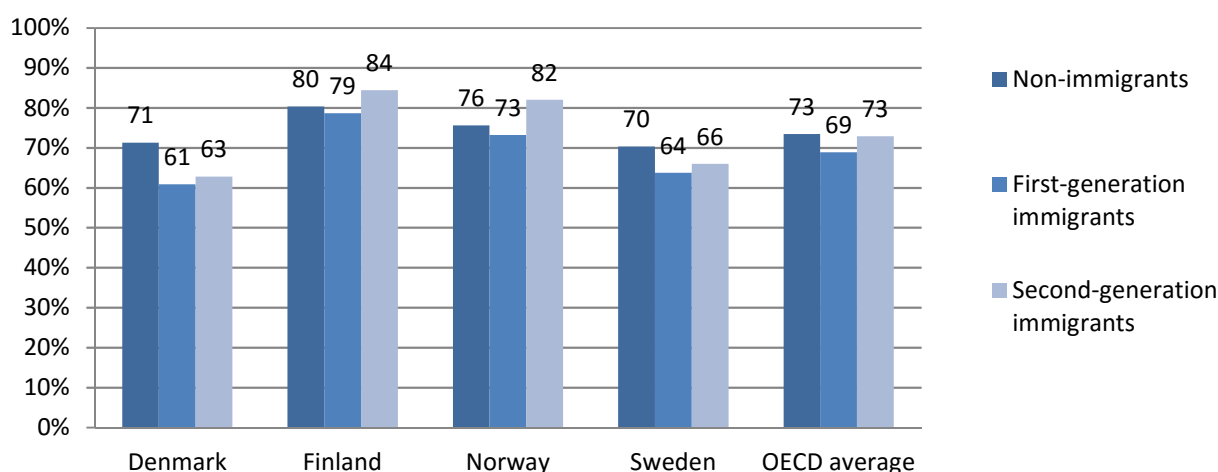
### 2.3.3 Social integration and wellbeing at school: Sense of belonging

The PISA assessment programme increasingly focuses on student wellbeing as an important factor to successful education. While this concerns all students, students with migrant background may face specific challenges; not least asylum seeking and refugee children. Children of immigrants often must overcome specific barriers to succeed at school; for example, the lack of familiarity with the language of instruction and precarious living conditions can turn the first years spent in their new country into a particularly stressful experience (OECD 2017, 121; OECD 2015a). In this way, school plays a key role in the integration of immigrant children because it is often the first social and cultural institution that children of immigrants have contact with and school

life, therefore, remains crucial for the wellbeing of children and young people (ibid). As such, student wellbeing is an objective in itself as well as an important vehicle to improve and ensure educational performance.

As one measurement for student wellbeing, PISA has monitored students' sense of belonging at school by asking students whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed that they feel like they belong at school. This is based on the presumption that students' subjective evaluations on the level of their connection with and within their school, and whether their need to feel a part of the school community is met, are important indicators of a school's ability to foster a sense of well-being that is not related to academic achievement (OECD 2015a, 34). Figure 3 below shows the sense of belonging in the Nordic countries compared to the OECD average.

Fig 4 Percentage of students who agreed to the statement: "I feel like I belong in school", by immigrant background, PISA 2012.



Denmark and Sweden both fall below the OECD average for students with immigrant backgrounds.

The PISA report draws attention to the finding that the relationship between belonging at school and performance in PISA is strong for those students with the least sense of belonging. Beyond a certain threshold, the relationship between sense of belonging and performance becomes flat.<sup>5</sup> It is thus important to identify and support those students with a very weak sense of belonging, because these students are likely to be adversely affected both in their personal wellbeing and in their academic performance (OECD 2017, 121).

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5 On average across OECD countries, the difference in science performance between students in the second quarter and students in the bottom quarter of the index of sense of belonging is 13 score points, while the difference between students in the top quarter and students in the third quarter is only 5 points (See OECD 2017, 121, Table III.7.8a).





### 3. Right to Education: Key immigrant education policies in the Nordic countries

#### 3.1 Denmark

Denmark: Key immigrant education policies 1980-2016		
	Introduction into the educational system for newly resettled migrants	On-going educational support for refugees, migrants and ethnic minorities
<b>Act on Integration (1999, 2002) 2014</b>	Ensuring educational success of immigrant children and youths is a key area of the overall integration policy, aiming at promoting equal access to the labour market and to participation in the democratic society as well as reducing social problems among immigrant families. Regarding education, the aim is to help immigrant youths complete an education that qualifies them for employment.	
	§15 stating municipal responsibility to formulate an integration-plan for the integration of newly arrived families including children's schooling and education was cancelled June 2016	
<b>The Education Act (1972, 1993, 2005, 2014) 2016</b>	Free, compulsory education for all children aged 6-16 years	Students with special needs are met with the same expectations as any other student. Special needs education includes differential teaching, counselling, technical aid and personal assistance. In 2002, a policy revision changed mother tongue education to apply only for immigrant children from the EU, EEA, Faroe Islands or Greenland In 2014, mandatory homework support was introduced in schools.
<b>Order on Education of students with foreign languages (1984)</b>	In 1984, the Order on Education of Students with Foreign Languages placed obligation on the municipality to provide mother-tongue education and to assist the student in maintaining the mother-tongue language and knowledge about their country of origin. In 1998, the order was replaced by the <i>Executive Order on Education in Danish as a Second Language (DSL)</i>	
<b>Executive Order on Education in Danish as a Second Language (1998, 2006, 2014) 2016</b>	<i>Reception class programme:</i> intensive Danish language course for students with different languages and schooling experiences [training in DSL and other subjects, equivalent to those in public schools]. Maximum two years before transition to classes following the regular curriculum.	Bilingual students, who participate in the ordinary teaching but need special support, are referred to supplementary teaching in DSL. The number of lessons is determined in accordance with the needs of the individual child.
	2016: Moderations of the conditions for offering Danish language support to recently arrived migrant students (see "Act on Special Municipal Programmes")	DSL was introduced through the Order on Education of Students with Foreign Languages, which has increased focus on Danish language and culture since 1984.
<b>Act on Special Municipal Programmes for Certain Immigrant Children and Youth 2016</b>	Temporary law instituted in 2016 as a reaction to the increase in the number of refugees arriving in Denmark (repeals on 31 July 2021) Special programmes as an alternative or supplement to reception classes, administered at the municipal level. No state regulations of framework or goals. Restriction of duration and number of students loosened.	
<b>Act on the Educational Environment for Students 2001</b>		Schools are responsible for ensuring a written evaluation of the educational environment, including the extent of bullying that takes place at the school. The evaluation is to contain an overview of the school's physical, psychological and aesthetic educational environments, descriptions and evaluations of possible education-environmental problems, and action plans/guidelines for follow-up.  Focus was on safety and hygiene until a 2017 policy change emphasising psychological educational environment and requesting schools to develop local anti-bullying strategies.

### 3.1.1 The Danish educational system - overview

The Danish education system is divided into the following stages:

1. Kindergarten: children up to 6 years of age.
2. Compulsory Comprehensive School: includes (ages 6-16); including pre-school class (grade 0), and primary and lower secondary education, comprised of grades 1-10 – (grade 10 is optional).
3. Youth education: includes upper secondary education and vocationally oriented education and training programmes. All youth must be offered youth education following the completion of compulsory comprehensive schooling.
4. Adult / higher education

On the national level, the Danish school curriculum is determined by the Danish Education Act. All municipal primary and lower secondary schools share standard requirements concerning the subjects that are to be taught at the specific grade levels, standard regulations concerning the so-called Common Objectives for teaching in the individual subjects, as well as standard regulations concerning the leadership and organisation of the school system. However, it is municipal responsibility to set the targets and framework for school activities.

In 2014, a major reform of the Public School system took effect. The purpose of the reform was to maximise the academic achievement of all students (through high expectations, challenging curricula, increased school hours and supervised/assisted homework provided at school), and diminish the effect of students' socioeconomic background on their school performance while strengthening students' wellbeing in school.

### 3.1.2 Availability

Compulsory education implies an entitlement and obligation for all children (incl. children of refugees and immigrants on temporary, legal expected stays of a minimum of six months) aged 6-16, to participate in the education provided by the public school system (*Folkeskolen*), free of charge, or in an educational equivalent to *Folkeskolen* (private schools or municipal international basic schools). Municipalities provide financial support for language support meas-

ures for bilingual<sup>6</sup> students attending private schools (DK Ministry Education 2016g). Early years education and care is offered to all children (also in asylum facilities), but is not compulsory. This pre-school is based on parental fees that can be partially or fully subsidised dependent on family income.

Asylum-seeking children of compulsory school age must be offered an educational equivalent to that of Danish public compulsory schools within or in connection to the asylum centre. Asylum-seeking children may attend regular public schools, if the arrangement is approved by the local authorities and the school in question (DK Ministry of Integration 2010). Teachers who have undergone special education qualifying them to teach Danish as a second language are responsible for the instruction (DK Ministry of Education 2016b).

Upper secondary education is not directly available to asylum-seeking children. Children and young people who are 17 years old and younger must follow the schooling equivalent of compulsory comprehensive school, while asylum seekers over 18 (who have not received a final rejection of their application) are required to participate in introductory courses either at, or in affiliation with, the asylum centre. The courses are designed both to introduce Danish language, society and culture, and to maintain and increase the asylum seeker's general skills and his/her trade or professional skills. If the asylum seeker is 17 years old, he/she can opt to participate in these courses.

**Teacher competencies and training:** The Danish Ministry of Education has recently taken steps to update and adapt teacher training in Danish as a Second Language and intercultural pedagogy. The training aims both to mainstream knowledge about teaching bilingual students among all subject teachers and to train specialists to provide additional targeted support in intercultural education and second language acquisition. In 2006, a reform of initial teacher training for *Folkeskole* teachers introduced basic knowledge of intercultural pedagogy and second language acquisition as part of teacher's general education. Moreover, student teachers can choose Danish as a Second Language (DSL) as one of their main subjects of specialisation in teacher training, and the offer of in-service training in intercultural education and DSL has also been extended (Nusche et al. 2010, 26). Further measures were taken to im-

6 According to the Executive Order on Education in Danish as a Second Language, bilingual students are defined as children whose first language is not Danish and who do not learn Danish until they are in contact with the wider society or potentially acquire Danish language skills through participation in the education system.

prove teachers' intercultural competencies in education with specialist teachers working as mentors and consultants for colleagues in 'language centres' at local schools, and through the initiative *This Works at our School* comprising online dissemination of a best practice study, and including networking opportunities for teachers to share knowledge on migrant education (EVA 2007).

Recruitment of teachers is a municipal responsibility and there is no national policy on recruiting teachers with immigrant backgrounds. However, the Ministry of Education recommends that municipalities employ bilingual teachers with immigrant backgrounds in schools with high proportions of immigrant students. In 2007, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration carried out a campaign to encourage more young people with immigrant backgrounds to become teachers.

The school reform in 2014 also included a teacher reform focusing on improving teacher competencies and subject skills through increased and targeted teacher training in both general and specialised education and in both initial teachers training and in-service, complementary training.

### 3.1.3 Accessibility

Under the Education Act, Denmark has a policy of free school choice. While students are always entitled to admission to a school within their catchment area, parents have the choice of enrolling their children in a different school in the home municipality or in a different municipality. In 2005, a policy change introduced an exception to the policy on free school choice, allowing municipalities to refer students with special needs, such as extensive need for language support in Danish as a second language, to a school outside the catchment area (DK Ministry of Education 2016b).

While the free school choice potentially provides access to any school, accessibility is not necessarily equal to all. In 2006, the Danish Institute for Local and Regional Government Research published a working paper on residential and school segregation in the capital region of Denmark. The study concluded that, despite moderately low residential segregation between ethnic groups, ethnic segregation in schools was high. In catchment areas with around 60 per cent immigrant students, the proportion of immigrant students in the local school would reach 94 per cent because of ethnic

majority parents opting out of the local school by utilising the free school choice (Rangvid 2006).

Concerning asylum-seeking children in compulsory education, special circumstances apply, and their schooling has been questioned over lack of accessibility (Jessen and Montgomery 2010). Asylum facilities provide the schooling for asylum-seeking children and are run by the Danish Red Cross or the municipal authorities. The education is carried out by teachers specifically trained to work with asylum-seeking students, and the schools are intended to prepare the students for Folkeskole. However, only few schools are available and some children are therefore required to travel far to reach school (Rydin et al. 2012, 9).

Since 2010, mandatory language screenings are carried out on all 3-year-old children perceived to have linguistic difficulties. Bilingual children, including refugees or children of families reunited with refugees, who are not in preschool and who have been deemed in need of language support are obligated to complete a language stimulation programme offered by the municipality (DK Ministry of Education 2016e).

**Transition into post-compulsory education:** Municipal Youth Guidance Centres, located in all elementary schools, provide guidance on the transition from the Folkeskole to upper secondary education to students and their parents. Guidance is provided under the same conditions for all students and parents irrespective of the student's cultural background. Through the guidance, an individual education plan is written. Extended reception classes are offered to bilingual students in 8th through to 10th grade (aged approximately 14-16) who arrived in Denmark after the age of 14. Instead of aiming to include students in regular classes over time, the objective of extended reception classes is to qualify students for the final compulsory school exam necessary for the students to go on to upper secondary education or other forms of youth education.

Students aged 16 to 25 years can be referred to language support classes at compulsory school level if such an offer is deemed appropriate and relevant for the student (DK Ministry of Education 2016c). For immigrants aged 14 to 18, recently arrived as well as others, it is possible to follow a course on Danish language and society at a youth school (ungdomsskole) that offers the courses of compulsory school years 7 through to 9 and other practical courses and leisure activities. These cours-

es can provide access to upper-secondary education.

At the upper secondary level, immigrant students holding residence permits in Denmark can enrol in a high school transition class (GIF<sup>7</sup>), a resettlement programme for immigrants and refugees. The purpose of GIF is to prepare immigrant and refugee students for further studies after upper secondary school, through either a humanities programme or a natural sciences programme. To participate, students must meet several criteria.<sup>8</sup> The programme is only offered in two upper secondary schools in the country (DK Ministry of Education 2016h).

### 3.1.4 Acceptability

The reception class programme for newly arrived immigrants and refugees of various ages was initiated in the 1980s targeting students with different ethnic backgrounds than Danish, comprising intensive Danish language courses for students with different language backgrounds, and offering schooling experiences. In 1998, the *Order on Danish as a second language in Folkeskolen* replaced previous law on the education of 'foreign students'. Hereby a shift occurred from focusing on students' right and need to learn mother tongue languages and remain knowledgeable of their country of origin, to a more exclusive focus on Danish language, culture and society. This tendency has since become more pronounced.

Public schools have guidelines concerning the contents and expected outcomes of reception programmes, but the municipalities and schools are free to organise the education of newly arrived students within these guidelines. The most common arrangement of education for newly arrived immigrants is reception classes, consisting of a maximum of 12 students and covering a maximum of three grades (EVA 2016). In areas with very few newly arrived immigrant students, the tuition may take place as individual instruction (DK Ministry of Education 2016b). Immigrant students can be taught in reception classes

or reception groups for a maximum of two years and should be gradually included in the regular classes as soon as they have sufficient language proficiency to follow a given subject in Danish (DK Ministry of Education 2016b).

Due to a recent increase in the number of refugees arriving in Denmark, the Danish Ministry of Education proposed a law in 2016 to expand the framework for the reception of immigrant students in the education system. In connection to this policy change, the *Executive Order on Education in Danish as a Second Language* was modified to allow more students into reception classes offering Danish language support. Also, restrictions on how many years/grades reception classes should cover were loosened; thus, depending on the homogeneity of the students' needs, reception classes may encompass five years/grades rather than the previous three years (DK Ministry of Education 2016b; 2016c; 2014a).

The 2016 change in the *Executive Order on Education in Danish as a Second Language* added to the existing legal framework for reception classes. A temporary law was instated, *Act on Special Municipal Programmes for Certain Immigrant Children and Youth (2016)*, allowing alternatives or supplements to reception classes. The objective of these special programmes is for bilingual students to acquire the necessary personal, social and academic prerequisites to participate in regular classes in compulsory schools or upper secondary education, or – for those above the age of compulsory schooling – to find employment. Also, special support for students with learning disabilities or mental health problems is offered (DK Ministry of Education 2016c; 2016g).

The special programmes are initiated in the individual municipalities and there are no state demands concerning the framework and goals of the programmes. The programmes are only to be partially defined within the legal framework of *The Education Act*, giving considerable leeway to municipalities in defining the content of the programmes offered (DK Ministry of Education 2016c). The Danish Child Council<sup>9</sup> has criticised the new legislation for being discriminatory against immigrant children, based on the argument that they are not guaranteed equal and acceptable educa-

7 High school transition class ('Gymnasiale Indslusningsforløb for Flygtninge og Indvandrere')

8 Including 12 years of education in the country of origin, having completed four years of English language training or having English proficiency corresponding to the level required at the compulsory school final exam. Also, students must have a level of fluency in Danish allowing them to understand and participate in discussions in regular spoken language as well as the ability to read and write texts with a nuanced meaning. When completing GIF with a passing grade, students are considered to have obtained a diploma equivalent to a Danish upper secondary exam (DK Ministry of Education 2016a).

9 To accelerate the integration of the conditions of children and young people in social planning, it was decided in 1993 to establish a Child Council (Børnerådet) as a safeguard of children's rights and to offer advice and guidance to public authorities concerning children's conditions in society, including school life. The Child Council was formally established in 1994 and given permanent status in 1998.

tion through these special programmes as the programmes are not bound by the Danish Education Act.

Homework support provided at school (stipulated in the 2014 school reform) is a new measure for minimising performance gaps between students with different socioeconomic backgrounds. A study conducted in 2015 by The Danish National Centre for Social Research (Nielsen et al. 2015) has shown that only 56 per cent of children with an ethnic minority background compared with 80 per cent of children with a Danish ethnic background felt that their parents were able to help them with homework. The study concludes that mandatory homework support may be a welcome response as it will benefit children with no opportunity of receiving help at home. Consequently, mandatory homework support is believed to be helpful in strengthening ethnic minority students' academic performance (Nielsen et al 2015).

**Language of instruction:** Students who lack sufficient language proficiency to participate in ordinary instruction are offered training in Danish as a second language. The school leader is responsible for the assessment of a student's need for education in Danish as a second language and the form in which the instruction should take place. The assessment is conducted in consultation with an expert as well as the students and their parents (DK Ministry of Education 2016b). The Ministry of Education has placed free materials for evaluating immigrant children's language skills at the disposal of municipalities and has financed the development of specialised assessment materials for bilingual students in different age categories. These materials are available for schools and local authorities in electronic form (OECD 2009).

Until 2002, municipal schools were obligated to offer mother tongue education to students whose primary language of communication at home was not Danish (DK Ministry of Education 2001; 2002). Today, Danish public compulsory schools are only liable for offering mother tongue education to immigrant children from other EU member states or from the EEA, Greenland or the Faroe Islands. Whether mother tongue education should be offered to immigrant children of other nationalities is decided at the discretion of the individual municipalities. In grades 7, 8 or 9 in compulsory school, education in so-called regular immigrant languages may be offered as an elective course for a limited time span of one year (DK Ministry of Education 2014; 2016a). The possibility of offering this course was introduced in the Education Act in 2014. To participate, students should

have practical proficiency in Danish as well as in the immigrant language in question. The target group of such initiatives may be students with an immigrant or refugee background, students who have lived for several years in a country where the given language is spoken, or other students who have practical knowledge of the language. It is up to the municipality to decide whether and which immigrant languages should be offered as elective courses (EMU 2017).

**School environment:** School health and wellbeing has a high priority in the Danish elementary and lower secondary school, both in terms of health prevention and promotion and as an arena for monitoring the health and wellbeing of children. It is stated in *Act on the Educational Environment for Students* (2001) that students have the right to a good educational environment and school leaders are responsible for the execution of a written evaluation of the educational environment in terms of safety and hygiene conditions, as well as the conditions concerning the psychological and physical environment at each school. Specific focus on social environment and bullying is emphasised. Moreover, the School Reform of 2014 emphasises a targeted effort to promote wellbeing at school, including a newly initiated survey to monitor students' wellbeing at school, with the intension of providing tools for reflection and concrete improvement of classroom wellbeing (Danish Ministry of Education 2014).

### 3.1.5 Adaptability

The Danish education system is equity-based, meaning that the public school is considered a primary institution where equality between individuals from different backgrounds can be established (Nusche et al. 2010). There is no tracking in the education system, meaning that the Folkeskole is undivided and the objects clause of the Education Act states that the functioning of the school must build on, among other things, equality. Whereas focus has previously been directed at ensuring equality between students from different regions, then between gender groups and between different socio-economic groups, attention has, within the last decades, turned to groups with different ethnic backgrounds (Ekholm 2004). Nevertheless, international and national research shows a pattern of underachievement (math, reading and science) of immigrants in the Danish Folkeskole (Nusche et al. 2010, 19). The OECD report on immigrant education (2010) shows socio-economic background as a strong contributing factor, thus suggesting that not



only are targeted measures for immigrants important, but also more universal equity policies focusing on all students with low socio-economic resources (Nusche et al 2010, 19).

In Denmark, inclusive schooling is both a political priority and a clear aim for schools. Since 1993, public schools have been obliged to differentiate education according to students' needs in general and not by transferring students to special needs education. In 2012, an amendment to the Education Act was made to point out the aims of a more inclusive school, capable of educating more students in the mainstream system. The amendment also gives schools concrete directions on how to meet educational challenges and how to organise differentiated and individual education. The act gives the head teacher responsibility for creating and using tools for inclusive education.

The Children's Learning Council develops specific measures to ensure respect for diversity at schools. The Council (Rådet for Børns Læring) under the Ministry of Education is responsible for guiding and evaluating the efforts of the Danish school system in securing the integration of children with ethnic minority backgrounds, fighting the reproduction of social inequalities in children and including children whose development depends on special support (DK Ministry of Education 2016a). The *Act on Ethnic Equal Treatment* (2003) forbids any kind of discriminatory practices against ethnic minorities within public institutions, including the education system. Furthermore, in 2010, the Danish government developed an action plan to counter prejudice and discrimination, including initiatives directed at primary schools (Danish Government 2010).

### 3.1.6 The right to education in Denmark – summary

All children with legal residency in Denmark have the right and obligation to education in the public school system, free of charge. Policy measures to increase the availability of education include, since the early 2000s, targeted efforts in teacher training, both general teacher education and in-service training, to ensure teachers' competencies and skills in teaching DSL and in intercultural teaching. Moreover, campaigns to recruit teachers with ethnic minority backgrounds have been carried out.

School segregation remains a challenge in terms of ensuring *accessibility* to quality education. Most

efforts to meet these challenges are municipal, except for a policy change in 2005 allowing schools to refer students with special needs to a school outside of the catchment area.

The reception class programme of newly arrived immigrants and refugees was initiated in the 1980s. In 1998, the *Order on Danish as a second language in Folkeskolen* replaced previous law on the education of 'foreign students' reflecting a shift from focusing on students' right and need to learn mother tongue languages to a more exclusive focus on Danish language, culture and society. Newly arrived students receive education in reception classes until the school considers them ready to follow regular education (perhaps with extra tuition in DSL – students do not have the right to mother tongue teaching). A temporary law was instated in 2016 allowing alternatives or supplements to reception classes. Education in these classes is not fully bound by the Danish Education Law which may constrain the *acceptability* of education for newly arrived students because of the limited accountability.

In Denmark, *adaptability* in terms of inclusive schooling is both a political priority and a clear aim for schools. Since 1993, public schools have been obliged to differentiate education according to students' needs in general and by limiting the transfer of students to special needs education, a priority that was cemented in 2012. Furthermore, measures to ensure the respect of diversity at school are taken, including an action plan directed at primary schools to counter prejudice and discrimination.

## 3.2 Finland

Finland: Key immigrant education policies 1980-2016		
	Introduction into the educational system for newly arrived migrants	On-going educational support for refugees, migrants and ethnic minorities
<b>Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration 2010</b>	Objective to promote integration, equality and freedom of choice of immigrants through measures which help them to acquire the essential knowledge and skills they need to function in society, and to ensure the essential livelihood and welfare of asylum seekers by arranging for their reception The personal study programme may form part of the student's integration plan. (Repeals Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers, 1999)	
<b>The Principles Concerning Immigration Policy 2009</b>	Ensure the right of immigrants to their own language and culture and equal treatment. Consider the needs of immigrants within regular services and systems and seek to avoid, where possible, using tailored measures. Cultural rights and mainstreaming of services stand central also in migrant education policies. Migrant education is organised according to the inclusion principle in general education with other pupils. Migrant origin pupils will receive personal tailor made support when needed and preparatory classes for migrant origin pupils are organised. The basic principle of Finnish education policy is equal access to highquality education and training. The basic right to education and to one's own culture is recorded in the Constitution. Public authorities must secure equal opportunities for education and self-development for every resident also after compulsory schooling. Education is free at all levels from pre-primary to higher education (FNAE 2012).	
<b>The Youth Act 2016</b>		Support young people's growth and independence, to promote young people's active citizenship and empowerment and to improve young people's growth and living conditions 2012-2015: Strategic goals of the Child and Youth Policy Programme 2012-2015: Promoting Non-discrimination; Strategic goal 7/ Regardless of background, all children and young people have access to quality education (MEC 2016a, 26-27, 33)
<b>The Basic Education Act 1998 (1983,1994, 1998, 2008)</b>	All immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers of compulsory school age (7-17) residing in Finland have the right to the same basic education as Finns. Furthermore, all children of 6 years of age have a right and obligation to free of charge pre-primary education (2000).	Education must be provided according to students' capabilities to promote their healthy growth and development and students participating in education are entitled to a safe learning environment. Every pupil has an individualised needbased systematic education plan in each grade of basic education, until upper secondary education. Right to have education in mother language to promote children's skills in practicing own mother tongue and knowing one's culture of origin (2008)—also in upper secondary education.
<b>National core curriculum for basic education 2014 (2004, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010)</b>		Right to learn Finnish/Swedish according to the second language curriculum. Schools organise according to their capacities; <i>special support education</i> for migrant origin students in different subjects. Special support can be given in student's own mother language. No standardised test until graduation; students' individual background/language progress included in assessments
<b>National core curriculum for instruction preparing immigrants for basic education 2015 (2009)</b>	Possibility of 1-year preparatory class to support the students' balanced development and integration into Finnish society and to give them the necessary skills to attend basic education	2013: The Action Programme for Equal Opportunity in Education aims to improve the situation of disadvantaged groups and to reduce gender differences and the impact of socioeconomic background in education.
<b>National core curriculum for instruction preparing immigrants for upper secondary education (2014, 2015)</b>	Aims at improving language and other learning skills needed in upper secondary education. Also, to give knowledge about Finnish society and educational system, to support the migrant origin student in learning to put realistic aims for her/his educational and developmental goals. Duration: one year full-time (FNAE 2015b)	

### 3.2.1 The Finnish education system – Overview

Finland is a bilingual country (Finnish and Swedish are the main spoken languages) and there are Finnish, Swedish and bilingual educational institutions. Education consists of the following stages:

- Early childhood education and care (ECEC) (voluntary) 0-5 years old
- Pre-primary education (1 year, compulsory) for 6-year-olds
- Basic education (9 years, compulsory) starting in the year when the child turn 7 years old
- Upper secondary education, vocational and/or upper secondary general education (3-4 years) usually 16 to 18 years old
- Adult / higher education

The Finnish Parliament<sup>10</sup> forms educational legislation and policies that are implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), which is responsible for developing educational, scientific, cultural, sporting and youth policies. The Finnish National Agency of Education (FNAE) implements and monitors development in the educational sector. Governance has been based on the principle of decentralisation since the early 1990s and most institutions providing basic and upper secondary level education are maintained by local authorities or joint municipal boards. Local education providers are responsible for practical teaching arrangements as well as the effectiveness and quality of the education provided. Local authorities determine how much autonomy is passed on to individual schools, allowing budget management, acquisitions and recruitment to be the responsibility of the schools.

### 3.2.2 Availability

Basic education (ages 7–16) is compulsory and education is free at all levels from pre-primary to higher education.<sup>11</sup> In pre-primary and basic education, school materials, school meals and commuting are provided free of charge. Children with immigrant origin have had the legal right to education since 1983, which is stipulated in the Basic Education Act. Ac-

cordingly, unaccompanied asylum seekers and irregular migrant children have the same rights to schooling as natives in Finland.

The Finnish ECEC is based on an integrated approach to care, education and teaching, and participation in ECEC is subject to a fee depending on family income and the number of children. Every child (10 months – 6 years of age) has the right to 20 weekly hours of early childhood education and care (ECEC). Until recently regulations focused on parents' entitlement to a day care place for their children, whereas the new *National Curriculum guidelines on ECEC* (FNAE 2016) consider the ECEC as a right of the child. All 6-year-old children have a right to free of charge pre-primary education, usually organised in ECEC facilities (Basic Education Act 2010).

**Teacher competencies and training:** During the 1970s the Finnish education system changed from a parallel to a comprehensive school system (primary and secondary education together with no tracking). This change was accompanied by the recognition that to create a school system that could serve all students equally well, regardless of family background, would require a teaching force with a very high level of knowledge and skills. Extensive reforms then significantly raised the bar for aspiring teachers by moving teacher preparation from the Teacher College into the university, and ultimately requiring all teachers, primary through to upper secondary, to obtain a Master's degree as a condition of employment. Finland also has a long tradition of in-service teacher training that has developed over the years as national curricular changes have been implemented (OECD 2011).

Municipalities, school administrators and teachers enjoy a high degree of autonomy. While the *National Core Framework Curriculum* includes guidelines for teaching arrangements, learning goals and assessment criteria, schools and municipalities are free to plan their own curriculums to reflect local concerns. Teachers choose their own instructional methods, select their own textbooks, create their own assessments based on common learning goals—and report each student's progress to both parents and the authorities. Thus, Finnish schools place significant responsibility on well-trained teachers. Regarding migrant children, it is the teachers' role and responsibility to support the child in both the mother tongue and Finnish or Swedish, as either the primary teaching language or as a second language. In 2011, the University of Helsinki initiated a teacher training programme that focuses on multicultural education.

10 During 1990-2015 there have been 10 governments in power in Finland. Each government has got its own general four-year programme for Finnish society and four specific programmes for immigration (1992, 1997, 2006, 2015).

11 An exception is the tuition fees for non-EU and non-EEA students in higher education, effective from autumn 2016. Most higher education institutions will introduce such tuition fees in 2017.



Otherwise, teacher training in meeting the demands of diverse students, including refugee and asylum-seeking children, is provided through in-service complementary training programmes. The Ministry of Education has set up teacher networks to help in matters related to immigrant education (MEC/OECD 2009).

### 3.2.3 Accessibility

Historically, a key objective of Finnish education policy has been to provide all citizens with equal opportunities to receive a high-quality education, regardless of age, domicile, economic situation, gender or mother tongue. Education in Finland is publicly financed from pre-school to higher education. The network of education institutions still covers the entire country, although the number of closed schools and merged institutions has been increasing since the recession in the 1990s. Finland's current education has no ability tracking or other structures that separate students early on into academic or vocational education (Aho et al. 2006, 9).

A report on Policy Development and Reform Principles of Basic and Secondary Education in Finland since 1968 (Aho et al. 2006) suggests that Comprehensive schools that offer all children the same high quality, publicly financed education (not only teaching but also counselling, health, nutrition and special-education services) are part and parcel of the educational system over time.<sup>12</sup>

Privatisation of the school system has been almost non-existent in Finland. Municipalities typically assign students to a school near home, though parents are free to choose the comprehensive school of their preference, within certain limits. In recent decades, the principle of equity in schooling has been questioned since parents increasingly selectively choose the school they want their children to attend, and schools have been granted more autonomy in selecting their students. Values such as excellence, efficacy, profitability and competitive ability in education have become more widespread, causing debate on whether a neo-liberalisation of the basic education system is occurring as schools are privatised and marketed (Ahonen 2003; Seppänen 2006; Varjo 2007).

#### **Transition into post-compulsory education:**

In 2014, preparatory education for immigrants was

implemented to improve opportunities for general upper secondary education for students from immigrant backgrounds. The aims of *Preparatory Education for General Upper Secondary Education* (2014) are to support immigrants and foreign-language speakers at this level of education. In addition to improving language and other learning skills needed in upper secondary education, the preparatory education intends to support lifelong learning and self-development. Other objectives of the education are to promote knowledge about Finnish society and culture. In 2015, it was added to the curriculum to promote migrant students' capacities to act as active citizens in Finnish society. Additionally, as far as possible, the mother tongue skills of student are promoted (FNAE 2015c, 22).

Since 2006, a preparatory course for vocational training for migrant origin students has been available. This VALMA-course focuses on the special learning needs of students and enables young people to improve their student/learning skills. It is aimed at young people who have passed basic education but remain outside of the secondary upper education system, and the course intends to support young people who need to improve their ability to study further and/or need support and guidance in deciding which vocational education and training (VET) branch to select. The VALMA- course lasts one year (FNAE 2008, 2010b, 2015d).

In 2012, the Ministry of Education and Culture introduced its second *Development Plan for Education and Research for 2011-2016* (FMEC 2012), including specific focus on immigrants' participation in education and training (Valtiontalouden tarkastusvirasto 2015).

### 3.2.4 Acceptability

Multicultural identity building and functional bilingualism are cornerstones of migrant child education in Finland. The basic values of *The National core curriculum for basic education* (FNAE Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2004) are human rights, equality, democracy, natural diversity, preservation of environmental viability and the endorsement of multiculturalism. It is stated that instruction at school must consider the diversification of Finnish culture through the arrival of people from other cultures. The instruction should help to support the formation of student's own cultural identity. In the same vein, the instruction should also help to promote tolerance and intercultural understanding (FNAE 2004, 12;

12 The transition from a parallel form of school organisation to the single comprehensive system was phased in slowly. Implementation did not begin until 1972, and the last southern municipality to implement the new comprehensive system did so in 1977.

MEC 2016b). Teaching must be adjusted to students' individual needs and tuition in both mother tongue and official language is state-funded. Municipalities receive extra funding for each child who has lived in Finland for less than 4 years to support language acquisition. In addition, in big cities, the schools of deprived neighbourhoods may have extra positive discrimination grants for their work determined by the socioeconomic composition of the population, such as the educational and income levels of the adults and the proportion of migrant origin population in the area (for example In Helsinki; Opetuslautakunta 2016).

The teaching of immigrants follows the national curriculum of basic education, while considering the backgrounds and starting points of each pupil, such as her/his mother tongue and culture, cause of immigration and time lived in the country. Teaching should also support the growth of a student as an active and balanced member of Finnish society and the pupil's own language and culture community (FNAE 2017a).

The migrant specific *National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing Immigrants for Basic Education* (FNAE 2009) was introduced for those students whose Finnish or Swedish language skills and/or learning abilities are not sufficient to study in a pre-primary or basic education group. During preparatory instruction, students will be integrated into Finnish- or Swedish-language teaching groups in pre-primary or basic education corresponding with their own age, in the manner determined in each student's personal study programme. During preparatory instruction, the schools are responsible for introducing parents to the new country's education system, while the school's student welfare staff are responsible for creating basic conditions for the well-being of children and young people, for identifying any possible support needs and initiating relevant support measures. Young people are entitled to receive guidance counselling concerning further studies (MEC/OECD 2009, 17).

As part of educational rights, immigrant children have had the right to mother tongue education since 1998 (Basic Education Act 1998). Learning one's mother tongue is believed to strengthen the multicultural identity of a student and her/his functional bilingualism. Mother tongue education is considered an asset to general learning in the sense that when a student receives education in her/his mother tongue it promotes learning the content of any subject (FNAE 2009, 2015b). Furthermore, immigrant students may choose to learn

Finnish/Swedish according to the second language curriculum, which may enhance their learning (FNAE 2004, 2014).

**School environment:** Following the Basic Education Act (1998), education must be provided according to students' capabilities to promote their healthy growth and development, and students participating in education are entitled to a safe learning environment. In the National curriculum of basic/secondary/vocational education, the local educational authorities must draw up a plan to protect students from violence, bullying, harassment and discrimination, and implement the plan and monitor its compliance and implementation (FNAE 2017c). The Education Act further states that students are entitled to teaching that is based on the national and local curricula as well as accessible and available guidance and counselling. Students are also entitled to receive support for growth, learning and school attendance as the need arises, and to free student welfare services needed for participation in education. Currently, a reform in the areas of both curricular and national educational evaluation is taking place. The reform was initiated because students in Finland do not rank highly in the happiness index (included in PISA). The focus of the reform is to increase the joy of learning and transversal skills, making schools into learning communities with active child participation. Assessment tools are being developed to support learning, with the emphasis on formative evaluation of all key competences across subjects and with less emphasis on standardisation (Essomba et al. 2017, 102).

### 3.2.5 Adaptability

The Finnish basic education system has been based on the philosophy of inclusion for a long time. The *Action Programme for Equal Opportunity in Education* (2013) aims to improve the situation of disadvantaged groups and to reduce gender differences and the impact of socioeconomic background in education. Basic education is equal for all with no streaming or ability tracking. Accordingly, basic education of immigrant children is organised concurring with the principle of inclusion. The only exception to the inclusion principle is special preparatory classes for immigrant children, which as previously mentioned aims to provide the necessary knowledge and skills for immigrant children to progress onto mainstream basic education. However, all students are supported individually so that they can successfully complete their basic education.

Hence, every student has an individualised need-based systematic education plan made in each grade of education until upper secondary education. Amendments to the *National Core Curricula for pre-primary and basic education* (2010) include a new systematic way of organising support. The focus is on providing the earliest possible support to prevent the emergence and growth of potential problems. Support for growth, learning and school attendance is shaped into three categories: general support, intensified support and special support. Everyone is entitled to general support. It is a natural part of everyday teaching and the learning process. Intensified and special supports are based on careful assessment and long-span planning in multi-professional teams and on individual learning plans for students.

As part of their training, Finnish teachers are taught to deal with heterogeneity and diversity in the classroom, using a broad spectrum of methods to differentiate instruction and respond to the needs of each student. Few children attend special schools, and Finnish classrooms are heterogeneous in terms of students' abilities and backgrounds. This demands efficient learning in small groups, with teachers ready to arrange new groups where necessary. Research indicates that, in Finland, mixed ability classes have greatly benefitted lower-achieving students, while higher-achieving students are not negatively affected by changes in the composition of a learning group (OECD 004; 2010).

The National Agency of Education neither determines lesson plans nor requires standardised tests during the school course.<sup>13</sup> Schools and municipalities are, therefore, free to plan their own curriculums to reflect the local context. Hereby the student's individual background and his/her progress in Finnish/Swedish are considered in the assessment of other subjects. Versatile and flexible methods of assessment are used to reduce the impact of possible deficiencies in the Finnish/Swedish language, and the assessment of immigrant students may be verbal throughout basic education, except for the final assessment (Loogma et al. 2012). When giving scores in the Finnish Matricular Examination at the end of upper secondary education, it is taken into consideration when a student's mother tongue is different than Finnish/Swedish (MEC 2016a).

In a few schools, immigrant students may study their mother language as their first language within

the school's normal curriculum. Some local authorities have offered either bilingual or own-language education in Arabic, Somali, Russian, Vietnamese and Estonian (Loogma et al. 2012). Students are also entitled to instruction in their own religion if their parents/guardians wish so, and if there are three or more students of the same religion to form a group. If instruction in a student's own religion is not available, the student must be provided with some other form of instruction or supervised activities (FNAE 2017a).

Research has shown that some children with immigrant backgrounds are overrepresented in special support classes and special support schools in basic education (MEC 2009). When needed, schools organise special support education for migrant students in different subjects, according to their capacities. Special support can be given in students' own mother tongue. Educational support is provided mainly within mainstream education, but also in special classes and special schools (FNAE 2014b).

Illiterate children and youth with immigrant backgrounds were taken into legal consideration in 2009. According to *National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing Immigrants for Basic Education*, children and young people with poor reading and writing skills must receive instruction with specific focus on these skills, to prepare them for basic education. The objectives of students' personal study programmes should be established in such a way that students receive instruction appropriate for their own age and skills level. The contents should be selected to support their ability to cope with everyday situations and social integration and to facilitate the development of their own student identity. Learning one's own native language promotes a student's learning skills and consolidates cultural identity. If a student's skills are not sufficient to participate in basic education, due consideration is given to the schedule for moving on to basic education in the student's own study programme. Provision of sufficient support for illiterate students transferring to basic education will be ensured (FNAE 2015a, 2017b).

According to the Youth Act (72/2006), the government adopts a cross-sectorial Youth Policy Programme every four years. The programme includes goals for improving the growth and living conditions of children and young people below 29 years of age. In the first policy programme (Lapsi-ja nuorisopolitiikan kehittämisohjelma 2007-2011; MEC 2008), a number of focus areas related specifically to immigrant and minority students: a) *Diversity and equal-*

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13 National Core Framework Curriculum includes guidelines for teaching arrangements, learning goals and assessment criteria

ity; including measures to combat discrimination; b) *Children and young people's right to their own culture and active citizenship*, based on the notion that the prerequisites of young people's active citizenship is connected to the recognition and promotion of their own opportunities, rights and responsibilities; c) *Social empowerment* of ethnic minority children and young people; d) *Education for global responsibility and tolerance*, based on the notion that operating in a rapidly changing world requires a variety of skills and competence at encountering diversity. A cross-curricular theme, 'Cultural identity and internationality', aims at making the Finnish and European cultural heritage understandable and supports cultural interaction and internationalism (MEC 2008).

The second child and youth policy programme (2012-2015; MEC 2012) reflected an increased focus on participation, social inclusion and anti-discrimination. For example, stressing how participation in day-care and pre-primary education is important for the development, school readiness and integration of children with immigrant backgrounds (MEC 2012).

### **3.2.6 The right to education in Finland – summary**

Historically, a key objective of Finnish education policy has been to provide all citizens with equal opportunities to receive a high-quality education. Hence, both *availability* and *accessibility* for all stands central. Primary and lower secondary education is compulsory and free of charge, including free school meals. Children with immigrant backgrounds have had the legal right to education since 1983, as stipulated in the Basic Education Act. Accordingly, unaccompanied asylum seekers and irregular migrant children have the same rights to schooling as natives in Finland. Adequate teacher education has been a priority since the 1980s, requiring all teachers to obtain a Master's degree as a condition of employment. Finland also has a long tradition of in-service teacher training. Since 2010, focus has been increasingly oriented towards intercultural and multi-language teacher competencies to ensure the availability of high-quality education for all students regardless of their gender, economic, ethnic or linguistic background.

*Acceptability* of education is maintained through the aims of immigrant education to ensure equality, functional bilingualism and multiculturalism and preparation for integration into the Finnish education system and society. Tuition in both mother tongue and official language is state-funded. According to

policy, learning mother-tongue language is perceived to strengthen the multicultural identity of a student and her/his functional bilingualism and it is considered an asset to general learning. Municipalities receive extra funding for each child who has lived in Finland for less than 4 years.

In 2009, the immigrant specific *National Core Curriculum for Instruction Preparing Immigrants for Basic Education* was introduced for those students whose Finnish or Swedish language skills are not sufficient to study at the basic educational level. During preparatory instruction, students will be integrated into Finnish or Swedish language teaching groups in basic education corresponding to their own age, in the manner determined in each student's personal study programme. Migrant education thus remains highly mainstreamed, while offering partial transition/introduction programmes. Additionally, there are preparatory courses organised for secondary upper education and vocational education, as well as to universities of applied sciences. Preparatory courses are free of charge and their aim is to increase the necessary student skills at each educational level.

Finnish education focuses on diversity *adaptability* in education; historically, in making efforts to accommodate linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity and mainstream immigrant education. Meanwhile, targeted efforts have recently been developed through comprehensive youth policy programmes, including the (in the Nordic context) progressive cross-curricular theme, 'Cultural identity and internationality', that aims at making the Finnish and European cultural heritage understandable and supports cultural interaction and internationalism.

### 3.3 Norway

Norway: Key immigrant education policies 1980-2016		
	Introduction into the educational system for newly resettled migrants	On-going educational support for refugees, migrants and ethnic minorities
<b>Immigration policy</b>	<p>Meld. St. nr. 17 (1996-1997), Om innvandring og det flerkulturelle Norge [<i>About immigration and the multicultural Norway</i>] defined integration in terms of the Norwegian policy of equal opportunity, linking it both to cultural diversity and the needs of the welfare state</p> <p>Meld. St. nr. 6 (2012-2013), En helhetlig integreringspolitikk – mangfold og fellesskap [<i>A comprehensive integration policy – diversity and community</i>] deals with the opportunities and challenges of being a country and a society with immigration. All inhabitants in Norway have rights and obligations and should have the opportunity to participate in and contribute to working and social life. Everyone should contribute according to their abilities. No person should be discriminated against or excluded because they have an immigrant background.</p> <p>Meld. St. 30 (2015-2016), Norway's integration policy and measures should be organised to ensure that newly-arrived immigrants with refugee backgrounds enter the labour market or start an education without delay and acquire a permanent connection to the labour market.</p>	
<b>National Curriculum (1987, 1997, 2006)</b>	<p>Education Reform 94 introduced the right for all 16-18-year-old students who had completed <i>grunnskolen</i> (primary and lower secondary school) to access upper secondary education.</p> <p>Education Reform 97: Primary and lower secondary education expanded to 10 years (school start at age 6).</p> <p>The Education Reform Kunnskapsløftet (2006) [Knowledge Promotion] aims to improve all students' learning outcomes, and for the Norwegian school system to be inclusive of all: same opportunities for all to develop their skills – regardless of social or ethnic background.</p> <p>Lovvedtak 58 (2013-2014) allows asylum seekers under 18 to attend primary and secondary education while they await the resolution of their asylum application (if they are expected to be in Norway for more than 3 months).</p>	<p>In the National Curriculum of 1987, school authorities introduced functional bilingualism as a priority for linguistic and ethnic minorities (including students with a Sami background) stating that minorities should be offered teaching in and about their home language, and had a right to education in Norwegian as a second language (NSL).</p> <p>In 1997, the goal of functional bilingualism was removed, emphasising that minorities should be included in education (and society) through standardisation of language and culture</p> <p>Beslutning Odelsting, Besl. O. nr. 82 (2007- 2008) gives students in upper secondary education who have another mother tongue than Norwegian or Sami the right to special Norwegian education until they can follow regular instruction, as well as (if necessary) the right to education in their mother tongue, bilingual subject instruction, or both.</p>
<b>Education Act 1998 (and subsequent amendments)</b>	<p>Legally bound possibility for schools to offer introductory programmes for newly arrived minority language speaking students (Lovvedtak 64, 2012).</p> <p>In 2013, it was added that private schools can organise special education for newly arrive migrants in groups, classes or schools – if accepted by the municipality.</p>	<p>All students have individual rights to a safe, healthy psychosocial working environment at school and the school is responsible for maintaining such an environment and to ensure action if these rights are violated (guidelines specified in 2010)</p>



### 3.3.1 The Norwegian education system - overview

The Norwegian school system is divided into the following stages:

5. Kindergarten: children of –3-6 years of age.<sup>14</sup>
6. Compulsory school: children of 6-16 years of age, grades 1-10. The compulsory school is divided into primary school (grades 1-7) and lower secondary school (grades 8-10).
7. Upper Secondary School (*Videregående skole*, Vgs) provides three years of general education (Vg 1- Vg3), or four years of vocational education and training (two years at school and two years of apprenticeship). The studies lead either to admission to higher education, to a vocational qualification or to basic skills.<sup>15</sup>
8. Adult/higher education.

The Norwegian education system is governed by national legislation. The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for all levels of education (also pre-school) including curriculum planning, examinations and analyses to legislation and supervision, set by the central Education Act. The municipalities are responsible for operating and administering primary and lower secondary schools, whereas the county authorities are responsible for upper secondary education and training.

### 3.3.2 Availability

Attending school is mandatory from the age of 6 to 16. Most Norwegian schools are public schools (96 %) and all public education is free of charge (Kindergarten includes a parental fee that may be subsidised based on family income). The language of education is Norwegian<sup>16</sup>, but Sami, the language of the Sami minority, can be chosen as a second language. In the

Sami district in the north of Norway, education in Sami is also available.

Kindergarten is for children up to 6 years of age. Since August 2015, the Kindergarten must offer free core time (4 hours per day) for all four- and five-year old children and, since August 2016, for three-year olds in low-income families. Asylum seekers below the age of 6 may be offered Kindergarten, and the UDI (the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration) provides grants to municipalities offering kindergarten to asylum seeking children.

Since 1995, the right to primary and lower secondary education applies to all children who will remain in Norway for longer than 3 months; this includes the children of asylum seekers for whom it is expected either that they will be granted a residence permit or that the process will take longer than 3 months. In 2014, a legislative decision was made to extend this right to allow asylum seekers younger than 18 years-old to attend upper secondary education and training while they await the resolution of their asylum application (if they are expected to stay in Norway for longer than 3 months).

The Official Norwegian Report (NOU) 2011 "*Bedre integrering – Mål, strategier, tiltak*" [Better integration- Goals, strategies and measures] made important recommendations regarding the right to education of asylum seekers aged 16-18 arguing that, regardless of their administrative status (even if they are not residing in Norway legally), asylum seekers aged 16-18 should have a right to attend primary and lower secondary education or upper secondary education if they have completed primary and lower secondary education. While the 2014 legislative decision mentioned above was made to allow asylum-seekers aged 16 to 18 years to attend upper secondary education, irregular migrants (e.g. migrants who reside in the country after a rejection of their asylum request) remain without the right to upper secondary education.<sup>17</sup>

**Teacher competencies and training:** In recent years, a prioritised policy area concerning language-minority children has been to enhance multicultural and second language competences among teachers

<sup>14</sup> In 2005, the kindergartens were transferred from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs to the Ministry of Education and Research because Kindergarten/preschool is considered the first step in the lifelong learning process; activities in the Kindergarten refer to The Norwegian Kindergarten Act.

<sup>15</sup> In Reform 1997, primary and lower secondary education were expanded to ten years of education, and in Reform 1994 a right was introduced for all 16-18-year-old students who had completed primary and lower secondary education to access upper secondary education.

<sup>16</sup> As established by law and governmental policy, there are two official forms of written Norwegian – Bokmål (literally "Book Language") and Nynorsk (literally "New Norwegian"). The municipality decides which form of Norwegian will be the primary written language in any school. In 2014/2015, the percentage of New Norwegian language users in schools was about 12 percent. In grades nine and ten of lower secondary school, pupils are however taught both forms.

<sup>17</sup> The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was ratified in 1991 and incorporated into Norwegian law in 2003. According to UNCRC Article 28, Norway, as a convention state party, recognises the right of the child to education, based on equal opportunity, and shall, amongst other things, make primary education compulsory and available free of charge to all. Furthermore, Norway will encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures, such as the introduction of free education and the offer of financial assistance in case of need.

and other staff. The national strategy plan *Equal Education in Practice* (2007-09) focused on strengthening multicultural and inclusive teaching. Furthermore, multicultural education and cultural diversity became a mandatory part of all four-year teacher education programmes. Universities and university colleges in Norway provide optional, in-service, supplementary education programmes in multicultural understanding and multicultural pedagogy. To improve the availability of qualified teachers, immigrants with bilingual/multicultural backgrounds and basic teacher training from their native countries are eligible for stipends/grants so that they can acquire the supplementary education they need to qualify as teachers.

Yet, White Paper 30 (2015-2016), *From reception centre to the labour market*, addresses a remaining lack of formal teacher competences in these areas. In 2016, the number of teacher training institutions offering relevant courses increased and, to involve a larger number of schools and teachers, a five-year strategy has been set for teacher training to enhance multicultural competences and knowledge of teaching Norwegian as a second language (in primary, lower and upper secondary schools and adult education). This strategy, *Competence for Diversity*, is placing more emphasis on second language acquisition, radicalisation and the reception of refugee children in schools (Thorud et al. 2016).

New policies and targeted measures include: a) a "teacher pool" (2016), where teachers that have relevant teaching capacity may register, so that school owners can search for available teachers in their area with the expertise they need locally; b) the website Skolekassa.no ["The School Box"] (2016) with teaching aids in seven languages was created to provide relevant bilingual tools for newly arrived children learning Norwegian, English, Maths, Science and Social Studies (compulsory school level); c) Regional courses for school leaders, teachers, refugee centre employees and educational psychological services. The courses are meant as short introductions to the teaching of newly arrived children and youth.

### 3.3.3 Accessibility

Norway has a strong policy focus on equal access to education. Financial commitment to ensure access to early education and care include caps on parental fees in Kindergarten (since 2004) and free core hours (20 hours per week) in kindergarten for children from low-income families (since 2015). Increased focus on pre-school access and participation connects to the

principles of lifelong learning addressed in the White Paper *Early Intervention for Lifelong Learning* (2006-2007) that emphasises the importance of providing language stimulation at an early age. According to the *Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens* (a regulation to the Kindergarten Act), the kindergarten must support language minority children in learning their mother-tongue, while working actively to promote their Norwegian language skills. Assessment of language skills at the ages of two and four must be provided by municipal health clinics.

The focus on lifelong learning involves attention to school preparation during pre-school stages, including school start, and parental guidance for language and ethnic minorities regarding transitions into compulsory schooling.<sup>18</sup> A strategy introduced by the Norwegian Government in 2003 and revised in 2007, *Equal Education in Practice*, had the goal of creating better learning and greater participation of minority-language speakers in kindergarten, school and education. The National Centre for Multicultural Education (NAFO) carries the responsibility of implementing measures proposed in the strategic plan *Equal Education in Practice* aiming, among other things, to 1) improve language skills among pre-school children of linguistic minorities, 2) improve the school performance of linguistic minority students in primary and secondary education and training, 3) increase the proportion of linguistic minority students and apprentices who commence and complete upper secondary education and training, and 4) increase the proportion of linguistic minority students in higher education and improve opportunities for completing education.

Until recently asylum-seeking children have been enrolled in the Norwegian education system relatively quickly after their placement in reception and care centres. However, following an increase in the number of children and young people applying for asylum in Norway in 2015, longer waiting times occurred for the enrolment into primary and lower secondary schools. A survey from The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) in 2015 showed that at least 2372 children living in reception centres did not attend school (Berg et al. 2016). The challenge was caused by a strain on the asylum reception system, but other reasons for asylum seeking children not attending school may be the municipalities' lack of awareness

18 Handbook on the transition from Kindergarten to school: "Fra eldst til yngst - Samarbeid og sammenheng mellom barnehage og skole" 2008.

of the children's right to education pursuant to the Education Act (Berg et al. 2016, 10).

In 2008, a study examined asylum seeking children's right to education in Norway (Valenta 2008). The study concludes that while child asylum seekers are enrolled in primary schools shortly after their arrival in ordinary reception centres, they do not get sufficient adapted education based on the special needs of asylum-seeking students. According to the study, a main reason for this is the lack of optimal mother-tongue tuition and bilingual tuition. A report on integrating refugee and asylum-seeking children in the Norwegian educational systems (Rydin et al. 2012) addresses a major issue concerning the question of whether asylum-seeking children should be placed in introductory classes to learn Norwegian before attending an ordinary class. The research points to different experiences, stressing that, on the one hand, not knowing Norwegian may cause asylum seeking children to feel excluded both linguistically and socially, while on the other hand, the research shows that when children attend an introduction class, learning Norwegian is the priority, while other school subjects receive much less attention. Moreover, the children may run the risk of again being excluded by not getting to know their Norwegian peers (Rydin et al. 2012, 12).

#### **Transition into upper-secondary education:**

According to the Education Act, students attending upper secondary education who have a mother tongue other than Norwegian have the right to adapted Norwegian language until they are sufficiently proficient to attend the normal instruction offered. If necessary, they are also entitled to mother tongue instruction and bilingual subject teaching. A student, eligible for adapted language education, has the right to a maximum of two years of additional upper secondary education if this is necessary for reaching the student's individual educational objectives. A legislative amendment to the Education Act was made in 2016 to approve foreign professional training and to make it possible for municipalities to offer more primary and lower secondary education to students who have a right to start upper secondary education, if they need it.

This offer is for recently arrived young migrants and refugees (approximately 16-24 years of age), who 1) do not have an educational background from their home country that corresponds to Norwegian compulsory schooling; 2) have completed regular lower secondary school in Norway, but who, due to short residence time, need more training; or 3) have

a diploma from the home country that corresponds to Norwegian compulsory school, but need more Norwegian language and subject education before starting at Vg1.

To get prepared for upper secondary education, the students may attend an introductory class (*innføringsklasse*) (one year) at an upper secondary school, where they are taught various compulsory school subjects with a special emphasis on learning the Norwegian language. Another new kind of introductory class is 'the combination class' (*kombinasjonsklassen*) (1-2 years), which provides the opportunity of more differentiated education (subjects at different levels). The students may also host Vg1 classes in single subjects to prepare for upper secondary education. Both the introductory and combination classes aim at facilitating good transitions to the regular upper secondary school courses.

### **3.3.4 Acceptability**

Since 1985 language minority children have had the right to mother tongue education in kindergarten, primary and lower secondary education (NOU, 1985). In 1987, school authorities introduced functional bilingualism as a priority for linguistic and ethnic minorities (including students with Sami background) in the National Curriculum. According to this policy, minorities should be offered teaching in and about their home language, and they have a right to education in Norwegian as a second language (NSL). NSL education initially only reached a low number of language minority students, and implementation was difficult due to a lack of qualified teachers (Rambøll Management 2016). In 1997, the goal of functional bilingualism was removed, emphasising that minorities should be included in education (and society) through standardisation of language and culture (Engen 2010, 173). New goals for immigrants' attachments to Norwegian society were set in 2003 as legislation was passed, with the aim that immigrants should achieve the same level of education as those who are native born.

In 2006, a school reform – *The Knowledge Promotion* – was introduced, aiming specifically at improving students' learning outcomes. With this, a new curriculum plan was introduced aiming at providing level based language training for immigrants, for them to be able to join mainstream education as soon as possible. The reform focused on strengthening teacher competencies and placing Norwegian language instruction into mainstream



classrooms. The reform also introduced two new level-based curricula for primary and secondary (lower and upper) education and training: *Basic Norwegian for Language Minorities* and *Mother Tongue Teaching for Language Minorities* (2007), to address the learning challenges that immigrant children face. These offers were meant primarily for students who performed too weakly academically to benefit from the mainstream educational programme (Eng 2010, 174).

According to the OECD Norwegian Background Report on Immigrant Education (2009b), the background for the implementation of the new curricula was that the practice of Norwegian as a second language did not function according to intentions. Many students remained in this teaching situation throughout the entire school period, despite mastering Norwegian. Also, some students felt discriminated against when they were placed in Norwegian-as-a-second-language classes (so called NOA-classes) because of their segregated status. The OECD report further points to the novelty of the new curriculum as it was level-based. Survey material was developed to ensure students were placed on the correct level of instruction and, furthermore, to ascertain when the students had mastered enough Norwegian to take part in ordinary teaching (OECD 2009b, 82).

Today, according to the Education Act § 2-8, primary and secondary school students with a mother tongue other than Norwegian and Sami are entitled to special Norwegian language tuition until they have sufficient skills in Norwegian to follow the ordinary curriculum in school. If necessary, such students are also entitled to mother tongue tuition or bilingual instruction. These special tuitions are not separate subjects, but an offer that is given to students who need it to be able to follow the ordinary curriculum.

Until 2012, it was only possible to teach minority children as a part of regular school classes. A change to the Education Act in 2012 made it possible for school county authorities to organise special language programmes for newly arrived students in separate groups, classes or schools as a so-called introduction offer ('Innføringstilbud'). The education may be especially adapted to the individual student and differ from the national plan for education if it is considered in the student's best interest. This can only be done by consent of the student or their guardian. The introduction offer is transitional, for a maximum of two years. However, when the student is transferred from the introduction offer to an ordi-

nary class, the student can still have a need for, and a right to, special language tuition. In 2013, it was added that private schools can organise special education for newly arrived migrants in groups, classes or schools – if accepted by the municipality.

An evaluation was carried out in 2016 to assess the extent to which services provided to students entitled to special language tuition help give students sufficient skills in Norwegian so that they can be transferred to ordinary classes (Rambøll, 2016). The evaluation showed that 43,000 students (7 per cent) in Norwegian primary schools qualified for specific language tuition in the school year 2015- 2016. Furthermore, the evaluation found that many schools had found good arrangements for the organisation and content of the special language tuition. The evaluation concluded that the introduction offer, both in primary and secondary education, was considered a positive measure. Many students gained great academic benefit from the teaching in the introduction offer, including lessons in Norwegian and other programme subjects. Also, the introduction offer served as a good introduction to the Norwegian school system and constituted an important social venue for many students.

However, the evaluation showed significant differences between schools and school owners in terms of knowledge and willingness to prioritise special language tuition. The evaluation showed that for some schools it was unclear which students were entitled to special language tuition because the phrase "sufficient skills in Norwegian" was perceived as vague and challenging to operationalise. Thus, the evaluation calls for more explicit regulations and associated guidelines.

**School environment:** According to the Education Act § 9 all students have individual rights to a safe, healthy psychosocial working environment at school, and the school is responsible for maintaining such an environment and for ensuring action if students' rights are violated. A circular from UDIR (2010) states students' right to a good psycho-social environment (*Retten til et godt psykososialt miljø*), and explains how to interpret and implement the rules in the Education Act regarding the school's duty to act when informed of, or suspecting, that a student has been exposed to bullying, discrimination, violence or racism.

In the Official Norwegian report (NOU 2015:2), "*Å høre til - Virkemidler for et trygt psykososialt skolemiljø*" [To belong - Means for a safe psychosocial school environment], an appointed commission

addresses and elaborates issues related to promoting a safe psychosocial environment in schools, including preventing and handling bullying and discrimination. The document proposes measures including a modification of the Education Act to include guidelines for what schools should do when bullying cases are identified, as well as measures relating to pedagogical tools and organisational changes.

### 3.3.5 Adaptability

While the Norwegian school system is based on principles of inclusion, special-needs education is allocated to students when needed by a special-needs teacher within the framework of the classroom, (the students may attend a smaller group with special-needs teachers). The school and teacher can obtain pedagogical-psychological support (PPT) at both school and national level: The Norwegian Support System for Special Education. Schools and parents develop an individual student education plan (a translation and interpretation service is offered to the parents if needed) (OECD 2009b).

The Green paper from 2011 (NOU 2011:14), *"Bedre integrering – Mål, strategier, tiltak"*, [Better integration - Goals, Strategies, Measures] set goals that led to a budget allocation to develop competence in multicultural issues in the education sector (St. Meld. 6 2012-2013). These goals were, among others, that both immigrants and their children should be able to achieve the same educational goals as the rest of the population; that issues of diversity and inclusion should be anchored in educational policy and practice; to improve the use and recognition of the education immigrants bring with them. Hereby the Green paper called for a review of the Education Act "from a diversity perspective", including more research on how sociocultural/ethnic difference interacts with educational differences.

The Norwegian government considers schools as important arenas for social and cultural inclusion. Accordingly, prevention of and action countering discrimination and racism has developed over time. In 2002, an Action Plan against racism and discrimination (*Handlingsplanen mot rasisme og diskriminering 2002-2006*) was launched to counter discrimination and racism. The Action Plan proposed measures such as: 1) Strengthening the advisory services at schools directed to minority students, 2) Considering changing the Education Act so that incomplete primary and lower secondary education from the home country would not represent an obstacle to pursuing upper

secondary education, 3) Supporting higher education institutions that work with recruitment of minorities for studies where they are underrepresented, and 4) Recruitment of minority language speakers into teacher education programmes. The programmes, Meld. St 30 (2015-2016), *"Fra mottak til arbeidsliv"* [From reception centre to the labour market], describe further measures directed at preventing social exclusion.

### 3.3.6 The right to education in Norway - summary

Primary and lower secondary education is a right and obligation to all children, and public school is free of charge. Since 1995, this right has applied to all children from the moment it is likely that a child will remain in Norway for longer than 3 months, regardless of legal status. Since 2007 (strategy plan *Equal Education in Practice*), policy measures have aimed at increasing the *availability of* education through a strengthening of teacher education. Multicultural education and cultural diversity is a mandatory part of all four-year teacher education programmes. To improve the availability of qualified teachers, immigrants with bilingual/multicultural backgrounds and basic teacher training from their native countries are eligible for stipends/grants so that they can acquire the supplementary education they need to qualify as teachers. Since 2016, new targeted measures include a register of available teacher capacities, online sharing of best practices and regional courses for school leaders, teachers and other professionals.

Efforts to ensure educational *accessibility* include increased focus on lifelong learning, involving school preparation during pre-school stages, and school start parental guidance for language and ethnic minorities regarding transitions into compulsory schooling.

Educational *acceptability* concerns language and curricula. Since 1985, language minority children have had the right to mother tongue education in kindergarten, primary and lower secondary education. New goals for immigrants' attachments to Norwegian society were set in 2003 as legislation was passed, aiming at immigrants achieving the same level of education as those who are native born. In 2006, a school reform was introduced, aiming specifically at improving students' learning outcomes. The reform also introduced two new level-based curricula for primary and secondary (lower and upper) education and training, *Basic Norwegian for Language*

*Minorities and Mother Tongue for Language Minorities* (2007), to address the challenges that immigrant children face. A change to the Education Act in 2012 made it possible for school county authorities to organise special language programmes for newly arrived students in separate groups, classes or schools, as a so-called introduction offer. The education can be especially adapted to the individual student's needs and may differ from the national plan for education if it is considered in the deemed best interest of the student.

Prioritising educational *adaptability*, the Norwegian school system is based on principles of inclusion, and special-needs education is allocated to students when needed within the framework of the classroom by a special-needs teacher. New goals were set in 2011 to develop competence in multicultural issues in the education sector. These goals emphasised that issues of diversity and inclusion should be anchored in educational policy and practice, and that the recognition and use of the education immigrants bring with them should be improved. Moreover, prevention of- and action countering discrimination and racism have been developed over time, as evidenced by a 2002 *Action Plan Against Racism and Discrimination*, which was further developed in Meld. St.30 (2015-2016).

### 3.4 Sweden

Sweden: Key immigrant education policies 1980-2016		
	Introduction into the educational system for newly resettled migrants	On-going educational support for refugees, migrants and ethnic minorities
<b>Official Integration Policy introduced in 1975</b>	<p>In 1975, Parliament endorsed an integration policy based on the need to deal with labour migrants from southern Europe. The policy held three principal objectives: equality, freedom of choice and partnership.</p> <p>This also meant targeted language support for immigrant children. In the 1990s, a refugee introduction programme was introduced.</p> <p>Strategy of 2008: The goals of integration policy in Sweden are equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, regardless of ethnic or cultural background. An overall focus of the strategy is to increase the supply and demand of labour, and to create quality and equality in schools.</p>	
	<p>Introduction classes for recently arrived students lacking the necessary language skills to follow the regular curriculum.</p> <p>Individual introduction programmes with language support for older recently arrived students, preparing them for upper secondary or further education.</p> <p>2013: children who are in the country without authorisation shall be given, substantially, the same rights to education as children residing in the country.</p>	<p>1985: All children in compulsory school and preschool who have a different first language than Swedish, who do not speak Swedish at home, or whose parents have a different language than Swedish are entitled to mother tongue education. From 1997, it was offered if only the given language was a "living element" in the student's home.</p> <p>2016: Schools can offer their students mother tongue education in a different institution if it is by no means possible to offer the programme within the school itself.</p>
	1995: Swedish as a Second Language offered as an individual an extra course in all the education system	
		<p>1985: Mother tongue education should be offered if a minimum of 5 students wishes to attend</p> <p>Bilingual subject education in grades 1 through to 6.</p> <p>Educational support in mother tongue. 1991: Mother tongue education was placed outside regular school hours</p>
	<p><i>Curriculum for the Compulsory School System, the Pre-School Class and the Recreation Centre 2011</i></p> <p>Focus on non-discriminatory school by stating that concern for the well-being and development of the individual should permeate all school activity.</p> <p>In addition to the equity measures stated in the 1980 curriculum, the 1994 curriculum states that no one should be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnic affiliation, religion or other belief systems.</p> <p>1998: Sensitivity and mutual respect for different backgrounds and cultures. Focus on supporting immigrant students in developing their cultural identity and their ability to communicate in both Swedish and their first language.</p>	

### 3.4.1 The Swedish education system – overview

The legal framework of education is constituted by The Education Act covering education from pre-school to adult education. School is divided into the following stages:

9. Kindergarten/pre-school provided by municipals for children aged 1-5.
10. Pre-school-year for children at age 6 – non-compulsory.
11. Compulsory Comprehensive School – primary and lower secondary education, grades 1-9.
12. Upper secondary education (either preparatory for higher education or vocational) – grades 10-12, non-compulsory but a prerequisite to continue onto education at university level.
13. Adult/Higher education.

The Swedish education system has undergone a process of decentralisation, which has been especially significant from the early 1990s onwards. Thus, local autonomy of schools and municipalities, concerning teaching hours, class size, instructional content and methods, is a defining characteristic of the education system in Sweden and, as a result, school practices vary from one school to another. However, goals, objectives and control of results remain state-governed.

### 3.4.2 Availability

According to the Education Act, all children and young people have equal access to education free of charge in the public-school system. School is compulsory for children aged 7-16 living in Sweden, including asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. Children holding temporary residency are not subject to compulsory schooling but, like all other children, they have a right to education. Asylum seekers and individuals holding temporary residence permits are only entitled to upper secondary education if they enrol in such programmes before turning 18 years.

According to a change in the Education Act in 2013, children who are in the country without authorisation (i.e. undocumented immigrants or rejected asylum seekers) are given the same rights to education in preschool, primary and secondary schools as children legally residing in the country. Prior to the legislation change, children with irregular/undocumented immigrant status did not have the right to education, but the municipality could offer education

to these children (State subsidised). The issue of providing education for children with irregular migration status had been a subject of intense debate. Also, the UNCRC had expressed critique, arguing that the right to education must be regulated by law and not just be optional, and that schools must be protected zones (from immigration and law enforcement authorities) and that parents should not be afraid to send their children to school (Bourgonje 2010).

Pre-school is provided by municipalities (all children age 1-5). The amount of municipal subsidy for pre-school depends on the child's age and whether the parents work, study or are unemployed. Gender-aware education is increasingly common, striving to provide children with the same opportunities in life regardless of gender. All children are guaranteed a place in pre-school-year class, starting in the autumn term of the year they turn six until they start compulsory schooling.

There are 18 regular national upper secondary school programmes available; six of these are preparatory for higher education (e.g. university), while twelve are vocational. Entrance requirements vary between programmes, but all demand students to have passing grades in Swedish, English and mathematics from their final year of compulsory schooling. Students who do not qualify for the national upper secondary programme can enrol in so-called introductory programmes and from here qualify and move on to a national programme.

**Teacher competencies and training:** Local autonomy of schools and municipalities is a defining characteristic of the education system in Sweden and school practices vary from one school to another. A large part of the decision-making is discretionary for municipalities and principals of individual schools, leading to varying degrees of inclusion of immigrant students and their parents in school life across the country. In some parts of Sweden, immigrant students may benefit from multi-cultural pre-schools, teacher diversity campaigns and projects led by the National Board of Education, whereas these initiatives may be absent elsewhere (MIPEX 2015).

In 1987, Swedish as a Second Language was established as a separate course in the education of teachers for youth schools. Soon, the programme was extended to teacher education for compulsory school and upper secondary school. A reform of teacher education in 2002 emphasised professional development, including ear-marked funding for training in teaching Swedish for Immigrants (SFI). Steps have been taken to train teachers in intercul-

tural education. In 2007-2011, the government initiated the programme *A boost for teachers*. This was available for teachers who had passed a teacher's exam but wanted to deepen their knowledge in different subjects, and to offer a chance to study at a higher education institution. The state financed the programme by offering a government grant to municipalities, so that participating teachers could still receive 80 percent of their salary while in training.

Many teachers feel they lack the skills needed to meet the demands of highly diverse classrooms, including refugee children who have suffered traumas or other children with special needs, thus calling for more knowledge, in-service training and counselling (Bourgonje 2010, 50). The OECD Swedish country report on migrant education (2010) points to a challenge concerning the lack of qualified teachers, causing schools to hire teachers without formal teaching qualifications. Accordingly, the percentage of non-certified teachers in public compulsory schools has increased considerably in recent years (Taguma et al. 2010).

In 2011, Sweden started a new teacher education programme structured as four main degrees: a degree in pre-school education, a degree in primary school education, a degree in subject education and a degree in vocational education. Teaching practice in initial teacher training will be carried out at specialised training schools. More stringent requirements for admission into teacher education, including aptitude tests, have been set up and a teacher registration system (2013) was also introduced. Through a career development reform (2013), the government created advancement stages and provided salary increases for professionally skilled teachers in compulsory and upper secondary school (OECD 2015c).

### 3.4.3 Accessibility

Municipalities are responsible for ensuring that asylum-seeking children and young people get access to preschool, compulsory school and upper secondary education under the same conditions as everyone else who lives in the municipality.

As a guiding principle, families are offered places in the public school closest to their home, but parents are free to choose a different public school or a private school. It is the responsibility of the municipality to consider the wishes of the families regarding school choice. In 1992, a school choice reform improved conditions for privately owned but publicly funded free schools or charter schools. With this reform, a strong emphasis on free parental school

choice also became an important part of Swedish education policy (Taguma et al. 2010).

The school choice reform was assumed to counteract school segregation as an effect of residential segregation, owing to earlier restrictions on school choice based on proximity between the school and area of residence. However, studies indicate that the privatisation of the school system and the introduction of school choice have contributed to fostering ethnic inequalities in educational outcomes. For instance, free schools have attracted well-educated families, primarily in bigger cities, while students from families with fewer resources – among these a large proportion of immigrants – more frequently attend public schools. PISA data shows that there is a heavy concentration of immigrant students in disadvantaged schools: In 2015, 23 per cent of immigrant students in Sweden attended disadvantaged schools compared with the 15.7 per cent OECD average (OECD 2015d). At the same time, free school choice has caused immigrant students with a high academic motivation to orient themselves toward schools with a high concentration of Swedish-born students from well-educated family backgrounds (Skolverket 2009). Moreover, studies have pointed to the ways in which public discourse has led to a stigmatisation of schools in disadvantaged multicultural areas. This stigma negatively impacts the students' self-perception and their views of their school and their prospects (Skolverket 2009).

The Swedish National Agency for School Improvement gave financial support to municipalities in need of improving educational conditions for students in areas of ethnic segregation through the programme *Better results and decreased differences* (2006-2007). Priority was given to compulsory and upper secondary schools and schools for students with learning disabilities. The programme included development of tuition in Swedish, Swedish as a second language, mother tongue tuition and subject tuition in the mother tongue, as well as reading development and the role of the school library. The Agency also gave support to the improvement of cooperation between school and the home, as well as parental influence (OECD 2009c).

As for general policies affecting immigrant children in an early life phase, following a reform in 2002, access to early childhood education and care (ECEC) in the form of pre-school became a right for all children above the age of four. Parental fees are based on government recommendations endorsed by the municipality, and are set at between one and three per cent of the parents' income.



Through the 1980s, language support in pre-schools for children with a mother tongue other than Swedish was supported by government grants for about 60 per cent of children receiving language support. In the 1990s, the earmarked grants for this arrangement were removed and the proportion of children in mother tongue support decreased. In 1998, a pre-school curriculum was introduced which strengthened the provision of mother tongue support. In 2005, 14 per cent of the one to four-year-olds in pre-school and 47 per cent of six-year-olds in pre-school received mother tongue language support. Even though almost all municipalities have children with a mother tongue other than Swedish, less than one third of the municipalities offered first language support in 2010 (Taguma et al. 2010).

The National Agency for Education (NAE) is responsible for carrying out integration initiatives in the school system, and for preparing municipalities to receive recently arrived students<sup>19</sup> offering support for teachers and principals. The NAE has developed support materials for assessing students' proficiency in Swedish, as well as information material in different languages to inform and guide immigrant parents on school choice (OECD 2015d). Furthermore, to support successful communication between the school and immigrant families, the families of recently arrived immigrant students have a right to interpreters for special meetings for newcomers as well as for key parent-teacher meetings (MIPEX 2015).

#### ***Transition into post-compulsory schooling:***

Recently arrived students who wish to enrol into a national upper secondary programme, vocational training or further studies at college or university, but lack adequate language skills, can enrol in individual introduction programmes focused on developing Swedish language proficiency, corresponding to the compulsory school subjects of Swedish or Swedish as a second language (Education Act 2010). Introduction programmes also include subjects such as mathematics and English, as well as other courses missing from the student's prior education. Through these programmes, students can get a diploma from compulsory or upper secondary school (Skolverket 2015; Taguma et al. 2010). The principal is responsible for the on-going monitoring of the development in the

student's language skills, so that he or she can continue on to further education as soon as possible (SE Ministry of Education and Research 2014).

#### **3.4.4 Acceptability**

Compulsory schools are required to offer introduction classes for recently arrived students lacking proficiency in Swedish. However, measures aimed at providing recently arrived students with adequate Swedish language skills for participating in regular education are not regulated by the state and, therefore, vary between schools (OECD 2009c). Recently arrived students at the compulsory school age may begin immediately in regular school classes or (partially) in an introduction class. This decision is made by the individual school, based on an assessment of skills, competencies and personal circumstances. Placement of recently arrived students must take place no later than two months after their entry into the school system. Education in an introduction class should be discontinued as soon as the student has gained sufficient language skills for participating in mainstream instruction in the corresponding class. Participation in introduction classes is permitted for a maximum of two years (SE Ministry of Education and Research 2010a).

An explicit goal for Swedish migrant education policy is to help immigrants build self-esteem and acquire skills in their own language and culture, to develop them as bilingual individuals and promote their abilities to follow developments in their home country (OECD 2009c). In 1979, an amendment encouraging immigrants to maintain and develop their ethnic identity, language and religion was introduced in the Swedish constitution (Taguma et al. 2010).

Today, The Education Act states that mother tongue education should be offered at all stages in the educational system, from preschool through to upper secondary school (before 2011, the obligation did not apply to preschool). This applies to all students who primarily speak another language than Swedish at home, students whose first language is not Swedish and students whose parents or guardians have a different first language than Swedish. Mother tongue education in preschool is aimed at strengthening the student's proficiency in his/her first language as well as in Swedish. Hence, immigrant students can receive classes in Swedish as a second language as an alternative to regular Swedish classes (SE Ministry of Education and Research 2010b; 2011a). Moreover, extra-curricular literacy courses are available for all students with literacy problems,

19 In the Swedish Education Act, recently arrived students are defined as individuals who have lived abroad before settling in Sweden and who have begun their education in Sweden later than the beginning of the autumn semester of the year they turned seven years old. After four years of schooling in Sweden, a student is no longer considered recently arrived (SE Ministry of Education and Research 2010a).

non-immigrants as well as first and second-generation immigrants (MIPEX 2015). Depending on the student's skills, he or she may be given more education in Swedish or Swedish as a second language than other students in the same grade, to obtain the prerequisites necessary for following the regular curriculum. Additionally, in grades 1 through to 6 in compulsory schools, students with a mother tongue other than Swedish have the option of bilingual subject education, meaning up to half of their subjects are taught in their first language (SE Ministry of Education and Research 2011a).

In compulsory schools, eligibility for mother tongue education implies basic knowledge of the mother tongue in question. In upper secondary schools, 'good' proficiency in one's mother tongue is a precondition for receiving mother tongue education (SE Ministry of Education and Research 2010a). The principal of the school is responsible for offering mother tongue education in any language if a minimum of five students wishes to receive training and if an eligible teacher can be identified (SE Ministry of Education and Research 2010b; 2011a). The syllabus for mother tongue education covers the literature, culture and history of the country of origin (Taguma et al. 2010).

According to the 2010 OECD review of migrant education, the decentralised school system in Sweden poses a challenge to the implementation of policies aimed at the maintenance of immigrant children's mother tongue as some schools or municipalities may not have the necessary experience to respond to linguistic and cultural diversity (Taguma et al. 2010). Moreover, immigrants are often unaware of their rights to language support, both at the initial stage and when they are later eligible for introduction programmes. Hence, in 2005/06, the National Agency of Education Yearbook stated that only 55 per cent of entitled students participated in mother tongue education. In the same year, the proportion of entitled students receiving instruction in Swedish as a second language was 46 per cent. The complexity of the information on the right to language support may be a barrier to immigrants making use of it. This challenge may be especially significant for those originating from countries where the educational system is very differently structured, those whose parents only have basic literacy even in their home language due to lack of education, and those who live in municipalities where programmes are poorly adapted for meeting the needs of different immigrant groups (Taguma et al. 2010).

**School environment:** The Swedish National Agency for Education is responsible for ensuring that all children and students have access to the same high-quality standard of education and activities in secure environments that can improve the students' learning outcomes. The agency prepares knowledge requirements, regulations, general recommendations and national tests. Healthy and safe school environments are an official priority, and while school policies and practices vary from school to school, the Agency together with the School Inspectorate<sup>20</sup> has the responsibility to coordinate national initiatives for school environment issues, for students with disabilities and for newly arrived and immigrant students. In Sweden, the Child and Student Ombudsman (Barn- och elevombudet - BEO) promotes children and young people's rights according to the UNCRC. The BEO regularly visits schools for inspection and children and young people can contact the BEO for support and guidance regarding all rights to education, based on the premise that all children have the right to feel safe at school, to be treated well, to have a healthy learning environment, to learn and develop and to get help if they feel stressed or anxious.

### 3.4.5 Adaptability

Equity has been a foundation for creating the Swedish education system, and mainstreaming has been the major strategy for achieving this (OECD 2009c). The Swedish school system is based on non-discriminatory principles of equal rights and access to education regardless of geographical area of residence, social and economic background, gender or gender-transgressing identities and expressions, religious and ethnic affiliation, sexual orientation and age. Education is aimed at accommodating differential needs and competences in students as well as equalising the students' prerequisites for benefitting from instruction. According to The Swedish Education Act, all school activities should adhere to basic democratic principles and all persons active in the school system should promote gender equality and counteract any form of offensive behaviour such as bullying and racism (SE Ministry of Education and Research 2010a).

In 2006, the *Act Prohibiting Discrimination and other Degrading Treatment of Children and School Students* was issued to promote equal rights for children and school students and to combat discrimina-

20 See [www.skolverket.se](http://www.skolverket.se) and [www.skolinspektionen.se](http://www.skolinspektionen.se)



tion on grounds of sex, ethnic origin, religion or other belief, sexual orientation or disability. This Act is applicable to education and other activities referred to in the Education Act.

An evaluation of education for recently arrived immigrants was carried out by the School Inspectorate in 2014. Drawing on data from grades 7 to 9 in ten public compulsory schools, the report concludes that, despite a wide variation among schools, some schools perform well, while most schools do not sufficiently accommodate newly arrived students' prerequisites and needs in their teaching. Also, the schools only promote the students' self-esteem and trust in their own abilities to a limited extent, for instance, through teachers having high expectations of the children and their potential for learning. Finally, introduction classes generally ran parallel to ordinary classes and were sometimes offered in different institutions, making it difficult for the teachers in introduction classes and ordinary classes to cooperate on planning their teaching of the recently arrived students. In cases where the Inspectorate observed a learning environment successfully accommodating the recently arrived students' competences and needs, this was primarily due to the active engagement of a few dedicated teachers (Skolinspektionen 2014).

### 3.4.6 Right to education in Sweden – summary

All children living in Sweden have a right to primary and lower secondary education, free of charge. Children holding temporary residency are not subject to compulsory schooling but, like all other children, they have a right to education. In 2013, Sweden took policy measures to ensure *availability* of education through legislative changes to the Education Act, giving children who are in the country without authorisation (i.e. undocumented migrant or rejected asylum) the same rights to education as children legally residing in the country.

Measures to improve *availability* of education include improvement of teacher competencies. In 1987, Swedish as a Second Language was established as a separate course in the education of teachers for youth schools. A reform of teacher education in 2002 emphasised professional development including ear-marked funding for training in teaching Swedish for Immigrants (SFI). Further steps have been taken in qualifying teachers for intercultural education through the programme *A boost for*

*teachers* (2007-2011) and a new teacher education programme in 2011.

In 1992, a school choice reform improved conditions for privately owned but publicly funded free schools or charter schools. With this reform, a strong emphasis on free parental school choice also became an important part of Swedish education policy. Free school choice was assumed to increase *accessibility*; however, school segregation remains a challenge. The Swedish National Agency for School Improvement gave financial support to municipalities that needed to improve educational conditions for students in areas of ethnic segregation through the programme *Better results and decreased differences* (2006-2007). The Agency also gave support to the development of cooperation between school and the home as well as parental influence.

Measures pertaining to educational *acceptability* aim at providing recently arrived students with adequate Swedish language skills for participating in regular education. Recently arrived students at the compulsory school age may begin immediately in regular school classes or (partially) in an introduction class, but transition into regular education must occur as soon as possible. In 1979, an amendment encouraging immigrants to maintain and develop their ethnic identity, language and religion was introduced in the Swedish constitution. Today, The Education Act states that mother tongue education should be offered at all stages in the educational system, from preschool through to upper secondary school (before 2011, the obligation did not apply to preschool).

*Adaptability* of education is built on the principle of equity-based, mainstreamed immigrant education. The Swedish school system is based on non-discriminatory principles of equal rights and access to education regardless of geographical area of residence, social and economic background, gender or gender-transgressing identities and expressions, religious and ethnic affiliation, sexual orientation and age. Education is aimed at accommodating differential needs and competences in students as well as equalising the students' prerequisites for benefitting from instruction.



## 4. Comparative analysis

This chapter, examines the overall tendencies, in terms of similarities and differences, in the Nordic countries within the four dimensions of the right to primary and lower secondary education (*availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability*) for immigrant students, both upon arrival to the country and through on-going educational support.

### 4.1 Availability: Free comprehensive education while lacking teacher resources in diverse, multi-lingual classrooms

A basic premise to ensure the right to education is making education available to all children (Tomaševski 2001, 13). All four Nordic school systems are comprehensive systems building on single structure educational organisation (Eurydice 2014). Hence, education is provided from the beginning to the end of compulsory schooling, with no transition between primary and lower secondary education, and with general education provided in common and free of charge for all students. All four school systems, to various degrees, offer transport, health services and study materials during compulsory education; however, in Finland free school meals are also provided.

The four Nordic school systems are built on equal rights to education for all children, adapted to individual needs. In Sweden and Finland, this right applies explicitly to upper secondary education for asylum seeking children, while in Denmark, asylum seeking children younger than 18 years old have a right to education but not specifically upper secondary education. In Norway, the right to upper secondary education was amended to the Education Act in 2014, to ensure the education of asylum seeking youth while they await decisions on asylum applications.

A major difference within the Nordic countries regarding equal availability to all children concerns children with irregular immigrant status. Norway and Finland have incorporated the UNCRC into national law, ensuring children's right to education. In these two countries, children without legal residence also have the right to education. As of July 2013, Sweden has incorporated similar rights into

the Education Act. However, Denmark does not provide education to children with irregular immigrant status.

Availability of trained, specialised teachers is crucial to ensure quality education for all students. According to an OECD policy guide on integration of immigrant students, capacity building of schools requires 1) policy support of school leadership, 2) improved ability to attract high-quality teachers to schools in need, 3) a strengthening of teacher capacities, and 4) tapping the new supply of trained immigrant teachers (OECD 2015a, 88).

In 2010, The Danish OECD country report on migrant education concluded that Danish teachers lack necessary competencies in intercultural pedagogy. Many teachers did not feel sufficiently qualified to teach immigrant students (Saarup 2004). Another evaluation report (EVA 2007) showed that many teachers tend to focus on the deficits rather than the resources of immigrant students, causing the teachers to lower their expectations of these students (Nusche et al 2010). These results are confirmed in qualitative analyses on ethnic minorities in the Danish public school system, addressing the 'deficit view' as a barrier to immigrant students' educational performance (Horst and Gitz-Johansen 2010; Rangvid 2007). Accordingly, the availability of equal education in terms of equal expectations may be challenged. These results are not exclusive to the Danish context. In all Nordic countries (as in many other OECD countries), teachers express a need for professional development for teaching in multicultural settings as they face increased diversity in their schools (OECD 2015b, 17).<sup>21</sup> While all countries face a need for more teachers with special skills in teaching diverse, multi-lingual and multicultural classes, Sweden has been particularly challenged concerning the recruitment of qualified teachers, causing schools to hire teachers without formal teaching qualifications (Taguma et al. 2010).

In Finland, teachers are required to hold a Master's degree ensuring high professional standards among teachers. Moreover, since 2011, specific teacher training programmes have been available on multicultural education. Likewise, in Denmark,

21 According to the OECD 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS).

teacher training in second language education has been strengthened both in teacher education and through in-service training. In Norway, funding has been provided to develop multicultural issues across the education sector and in 2013 the Directorate of Education launched a new strategy, *Kompetanse for Mangfold* [Competency for Diversity]. This is a five-year commitment aimed at enhancing competence in all parts of the education system. The aim of the initiative is that staff in kindergartens and in schools should be able to support children, students and adults from minority backgrounds in such a way as to promote good learning outcomes. The assignment emerges from Meld. St. 6 (2012-2013) *A comprehensive integration policy - Diversity and community*.

The Nordic school systems are decentralised, leaving significant autonomy to municipalities and local schools to organise education. Also, immigrant students are unevenly distributed geographically (within the countries and within larger cities) and the challenges and opportunities of immigrant education differ across schools. On the national level, knowledge sharing and capacity building at local schools are pri-

orities in all four countries. In Denmark, a taskforce for teaching bilingual students was set up in 2008 to evaluate pedagogical approaches and facilitate networking with interested teachers. In Finland, the Ministry of Education has set up a network for teachers working with immigrant students, and in Norway consultative meetings are held between government and local authorities to discuss and evaluate effective practices. In Sweden, until 2008, 'Idea Schools' constituted a platform to exchange ideas and best practices between schools, teachers and education professionals (OECD 2015a, 89). In Norway, there is a similar initiative called 'Focus Schools', which are schools who in collaboration with NAFO - the National Center for Multicultural Education - focus on competence building in the multicultural field. Moreover, in Norway, efforts are made to ensure the availability of enough qualified teachers. This includes providing grants to immigrants with basic teacher training from their native countries, allowing them to acquire supplementary education to qualify as teachers in Norway. In Denmark, campaigns have been carried out to encourage young people with immigrant backgrounds to become teachers.

Availability of education: Key policy measures in the Nordic countries

	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
<b>Legal rights</b>	All children with legal residency have the right to education	All children have the right to education	All children have the right to education when expected to stay beyond 3 months	Since 2013, all children have the right to education
<b>Teacher training</b>	2006: bilingual/ intercultural education part of initial teacher training + possibility of specializing in DSL 2008: task force / network for teachers 2014: teacher reform, increased general and specialised training (initial and complementary)	1970s: Master's degree required to teach basic education 2009: teacher networks 2011: teacher training programme focusing on multicultural education + in-service complementary training programmes	2007: national strategy plan to make multicultural and inclusive teaching a mandatory part of teacher training 2007: grants to immigrant teachers 2016: Competence for Diversity (incl. emphasis on the reception and inclusion of refugee children in school) 2016: new measures include register of teacher capacities ('teacher pool') and increased focus on knowledge sharing and regional courses	1987: SSL separate course in teacher education 2002: extra funding SFI 2011: teacher reform to qualify and specialise teachers in general

## 4.2 Accessibility: Managing school segregation and ability tracking in upper-secondary education

To ensure the right to education, governments are obliged to secure access to education for all children at the compulsory school age (Tomaševski 2001, 27). In the Nordic context, two policy issues remain central: ensuring equal access to quality schools by countering socio-economic segregation and improving early education participation to ensure all children hold the necessary (language and social/cultural) skills at school start.

In Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, primary and lower secondary education is offered to all children in public schools, based on catchment area policies, meaning that students are ensured schooling at the school in their local neighbourhood. Although this model ensures the basic right to an available school, in such catchment area models, school composition reflects a de facto socio-demographic segregation in housing. Property prices and good quality schools are connected, meaning that good quality schooling has an implicit price in the housing market, potentially limiting access for immigrant students from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds (Field et al. 2007; OECD 2015a). Public schools with a large share of immigrant students often have many students with low socio-economic backgrounds and the schools generally show poorer academic results than other schools (OECD 2009).

All countries have free school choice, but in practice the freedom of choice is not accessible to all, due to over-subscription of high-quality schools and lack of socio-economic resources and/or lack of knowledge of the school system among some immigrant families, especially recently arrived families. In Denmark, research suggests that, since the introduction of free school choice in the 1990s, ethnic segregation has increased because non-immigrants tend to choose schools with fewer immigrant and disadvantaged students (Bloom and Diaz 2007). In 2006, the Danish Institute for Local and Regional Government Research carried out a study on residential and school segregation in the capital region of Denmark. The study concluded that despite moderately low residential segregation between ethnic groups, ethnic segregation in schools was high. In catchment areas with around 60 per cent immigrant students, the proportion of immigrant students in the local school would reach 94 per cent because of ethnic majority (non-immigrant) parents opting out of the

local school by utilising the free school choice (Rangvid 2010). Similar tendencies apply in Sweden, where stigmatisation of 'poor schools' also perpetuates and exacerbates segregation (Skolverket 2009).

Policy measures to improve equal access to schooling may include efforts to make schools in areas with many immigrants attractive to non-immigrants and advantaged students, increased information/support to parents regarding school choice; management of schools' selection criteria, or selective distribution of students with immigrant background in schools within districts with predominantly non-immigrant students (OECD 2010; 2015a). Due to the decentralised organisation of Nordic education systems, most policy measures regarding school choice and school composition are left to local authorities.<sup>22</sup> In Denmark, however, an exception to the legislation on free school choice was made in 2005, allowing schools to overrule the free choice of school if a school considers it necessary to relocate students; for example, bilingual students who do not speak Danish at a sufficient level. Subsequently, the policy measure 'bussing' was introduced in the municipality of Aarhus, to distribute students more evenly across schools. However, the arrangement has been questioned for being discriminatory and for limiting the crucial co-operation between school and parents (OECD 2010, 86).

Offering high-quality early childhood education, tailored to language development, is an immediate policy response to ensure equal access to basic school. Entering early education programmes can improve the chances that immigrant students start school at the same level as non-immigrant children. Improved access to early education involves offering programmes free of charge to disadvantaged children, and linking enrolment to wider social policy programmes that support the integration of immigrant families. To raise awareness of the value of early learning and thus overcome potential reluctance to enrol children, targeted home visits help families support their child's learning at home and can ease entry into appropriate educational services. All Nordic countries offer early childhood education and care, including the provision of partial or fully subsidised fees. Hence, the policy measures required concern the question of how to encourage parents to choose the offer of early

22 For example, in Denmark, the municipality of Copenhagen developed the Copenhagen Model for Integration seeking to expand school choice for immigrants (Bloem and Diaz 2007).

years education and care. Norway in particular has emphasised early years education as part of their policy measures on immigrant education through their 2003 strategy (in 2003), *Equal Education in Practice* (2004– 2009), which promotes learning opportunities and participation by language minority children in Kindergarten and schools. However, through parental guidance. Sweden has introduced similar efforts. Moreover, both Norway and Denmark have introduced language screening for pre-school children.

**Transition into upper-secondary education:** As with comprehensive schools, none of the Nordic education systems use early ability tracking. When transitioning into upper secondary education, students in all countries follow either a general (more theoretically oriented) or a vocational programme. However, while Finnish students also choose general or vocational education in upper secondary, both tracks are eligible for admission to higher education. Reflecting international tendencies, immigrant students to a higher degree than non-immigrant students tend to choose the vocational tracks in upper-secondary education (see table 3, chapter 2). The Nordic countries have career counselling opportunities and some also have preparatory educational programmes for secondary education (e.g. Finland and Norway). Moreover, measures are taken to include newly arrived minority young people into mainstream school systems by means of introductory/transition classes facilitating access to lower and upper secondary schools. However, increased policy focus is needed to address

the early tracking of students, as it may be harmful to immigrant students because early separation from mainstream students may hamper the development of the linguistic and culturally relevant skills needed to perform well at school (OECD 2015a, 91).

Asylum seeking children have a legal right to education in the Nordic countries. In Sweden and Finland, the right applies to pre-school, compulsory and upper secondary education on the same conditions as all other children and young people in the country. In Norway, the right to upper secondary education for asylum seekers aged 16–18 was amended into the Education Act in 2014, while asylum seekers in Denmark do not have the same right to upper secondary education. In Denmark children/young people who are 17 years old and younger are offered education equivalent to compulsory, public schooling, while young people who have turned 18 have the obligation and right to participate in education and training courses equivalent to adult asylum seekers.

Regarding access to upper secondary education, challenges for asylum-seekers also concern their qualification. Many of the young people who come to the Nordic countries as asylum-seekers aged 16–18 do not have a lower secondary education, or have no documentation of such education and, therefore, do not qualify for admission to upper secondary school. Moreover, many of the young people do not have sufficient language skills and/or subject qualifications to succeed in upper secondary education (Berg et al. 2016; Pastoor, 2012, 2013).

Accessibility of education: Key policy measures in the Nordic countries				
	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
<b>School segregation</b>	2005: exception to free school choice allowing schools to refer students to other schools based on special needs support (e.g. language)			1992: reform emphasising free school choice
<b>Early childhood education</b>	Subsidised ECE available 2010: mandatory language screening age 3	Subsidised ECE available 2000: all children at 6 years of age have a right to free of charge pre-primary education. 2004: Personal annual ECDC plan for every child. 2015: every child has a right to a weekly 20 hours of ECEC	Subsidised ECE available 2005: pre-schools are required to support mother-tongue language and actively promote Norwegian language skills 2005: assessment of language skills aged 2 + 4 2015: free core hours in pre-school 2003 + 2007: strategy plan to increase participation of minority-language children in Kindergarten	Subsidised ECE available 1980s: language support in pre-school based on financial governmental grants (cancelled 1990s) 1998: pre-school curriculum to strengthen provision of mother-tongue language 2002: children between 4-6 have a right to pre-school
<b>Transition into upper secondary education</b>	2016: language support classes available at compulsory school level	2012-2015: development plan to increase immigrants' participation in upper-secondary education (MEC 2012,33) 2006/2010: preparatory education to vocational training for migrant origin adolescents 2014: preparatory education for upper secondary education immigrants 2015: curriculum amendment to promote students' active citizenship	2014: asylum seekers aged 16-18 have a right to upper secondary education 2016: approval of foreign professional training + After completing lower secondary school, students have the right to three years of upper secondary education and training. Introductory classes and 'Combination classes' available for recently arrived migrants and refugees.	2010: individual introduction programmes focusing on language acquisition

### 4.3 Acceptability: Organising education through mainstreaming and/or transitional classes

The quality of education is crucial to maintain the right to education: governments are not only obliged to make education available and accessible, but they are also urged to provide education of a high quality (Tomaševski 2001, 13). The minimal standards concern safety and healthy school environments, while another important aspect is language of instruction. Education must be performed in an understandable language to be acceptable. Regarding policy issues on migrant education this poses the challenge of bal-

ancing education taught in a language that students already know (e.g. mother tongue) and/or the language they are required to know in their country of residence.

In the Nordic countries, policy measures mainly concern the introduction of newly arrived immigrants, bilingual instruction and mother tongue education. More generally, each country takes measures at state and local policy level to create and maintain safe and healthy learning environments. In all four Nordic countries, environmental safety is a basic right stipulated by the Education Act in each country. Since 2001, Denmark has had a specific legislation on educational environment that was recently rein-



forced emphasising the psycho-social environment and requesting schools to develop anti-bullying policy and strategy (2017). Norway set similar ambitions in 2015.

The organisational models of introductory programmes (courses/classes) for newly arrived immigrant students constitute a key policy area in all Nordic countries. Here, the option of taking an organisational model based on either inclusion (mainstreaming) or separation (introduction/transitional classes) remains open to local, municipal decision making. On the one hand, separate classes may provide opportunity for targeted education carried out by specialised teachers trained to deal with the comprehensive education and care of newly arrived children. Entering mainstream education may be difficult for newly arrived refugees who do not yet have the necessary language proficiency and may have been exposed to traumatic events before and during their flight.

On the other hand, studies indicate that 'pull-out programmes' are not always less successful both in developing strong language skills and in supporting transitions into mainstream classes (OECD 2015a, 85; see also country section on Norway 3.3.3). A recent academic analysis of the Swedish educational response to newly arrived students addresses the question of deciding on an organisational model based on either inclusion or exclusion of newly arrived immigrants at school (Nilsson and Bunar 2016). Based on the Swedish experience, the research indicates that the quality of education is disputable in transition/reception classes, because the teaching in these classes does not follow the standard curriculum closely enough. As second-language instruction remains a priority, curriculum content is limited causing the newly arrived students a loss of valuable time in their educational careers

(Nilsson and Bunar 2016; 409, Allen 2006). Furthermore, research has shown that language development and cognitive development are interconnected, and it is thus neither necessary nor desirable to postpone teaching in curricula content until the students master the language of instruction (Watts-Taffe and Truscott, 2000; OECD 2015a, 85).

In Sweden, efforts have been made to integrate language and academic learning through the development of curriculum for second-language learning. Most recently, a challenge has been to accommodate the sudden increase of refugee children, and in response, governments tend to increase the municipalities' discretion in organising separate educational

options for recently arrived students (Norway in 2012 and Denmark in 2016).

In Denmark in 2014, school-based homework support became mandatory as a new measure for minimising performance gaps between students with different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Concerning on-going educational support, the need for sustained language support within regular classrooms as soon as possible becomes even more pertinent. Best practices in the field of migrant education policy thus suggest that successful language-support programmes have certain features in common, building on: sustained language support across grade levels; centrally developed curricula; teachers who are specially trained in second-language teaching; assessment of individual students' needs and progress; early language intervention and parental involvement in language stimulation; a focus on academic language and integration of language and content learning; appreciation of different mother tongues (OECD 2010; OECD 2015a, 85).

Overall, the Nordic countries are oriented towards developing measures according to these best practice experiences among OECD countries. Some differences exist. As mentioned, Sweden is ahead concerning centrally developed curricula. A significant difference between Denmark and the other Nordic countries is the perception and provision of mother-tongue education. In Denmark, since 2002, the right to mother tongue language applies only to students from the EU, EEA, Faroe Islands and Greenland, while mother tongue education remains a central right in the rest of the Nordic countries. Moreover, in Finland, Norway and Sweden, mother tongue education is not only considered essential to general education and language learning, but is also conceived of as an important aspect of identity development and social and psychological wellbeing.

Assessment and monitoring of immigrant education in the Nordic countries is carried out by comparative measures on performance, participation, access and school wellbeing. However, most analyses distinguish based on the categories non-immigrant and first- and second-generation immigrant without identifying migration background. Accordingly, evidence-based knowledge remains limited on the acceptability of immigrant education concerning different categories of immigrants, including asylum seekers and refugees (accompanied and unaccompanied children).



Acceptability of education: Key policy measures in the Nordic countries				
	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
<b>Mainstreaming vs. separate teaching</b>	1980s: reception class programme 2016: possibility of alternative organisation of reception classes not fully bound by the Education Act to accommodate specific needs and school context	2009: possibility of 1-year preparatory education; focus on early mainstreaming	2012: possibility of arranging separate language programmes /introductory for newly arrived immigrant young people 2016: 'Combination classes' at ordinary upper secondary schools	2010: placement directly in regular class or in (partial) introductory class; focus on early mainstreaming
<b>Language of instruction</b>	1998: mainly focus on Danish language, culture and society in teaching 2002: only children from EU, EEA, Greenland and Faroe Islands entitled to mother-tongue language instruction	1998: right to education in mother-tongue language 2004: instruction must accommodate Finnish diversification	1985: right to education in mother-tongue language 1987: functional bilingualism priority 1997: shift to emphasise minorities inclusion through standardisation of language 2007: NSL increased mainstreaming in regular classes	1985: right to education in mother-tongue language 1995: SSL offered as individual course 2010: bilingual subject education (grades 1-6)
<b>School environment</b>	2001: schools are responsible for ensuring a written evaluation of the educational environment 2014: emphasis on school wellbeing	1998: student right to have physically and psychologically healthy and safe learning environment	1998: right to safe and healthy school environment 2015: promotion of healthy psycho-social school environment	Swedish National Agency for Education responsible for ensuring safe school environments

#### 4.4 Adaptability: Diversity and inclusion

By consistently referring to 'the best interest of the individual child' the UNCRC underlines the need for educational systems to become and remain adaptable; that is, education must adapt to each individual child (Tomaševski 2001, 31). This is a significant task in Nordic countries, facing the challenges of continuously developing high quality (migrant-friendly) education. Due to growing human mobility and global migration, contemporary schools face the challenges of educating a diverse population not only regarding ethnic and/or national origin, but also in terms of immigration status (Pinson and Arnot 2010, 5).

All the Nordic countries, albeit using various wordings, base their educational objectives on the basic premise of ensuring equal education for children, and adapting it to individual needs. Many children have special needs of various character and degree. In this report, the focus is mainly on the policy measures developed to meet the challenge of adapting education to immigrant students' needs and resources. A

significant challenge in all Nordic countries is how to meet the special needs of newly arrived refugee and asylum-seeking children as they may have specific social and mental health needs. However, adaptability, ensuring that the educational system accommodates students with immigrant backgrounds, immigrants and ethnic minorities in the long term, also remains crucial.

The Nordic school systems build on principles of inclusive schooling stipulated in basic educational policy. Accordingly, to the extent possible, all children must receive the same education, adjusted to their special needs. The Norwegian OECD background report on migrant education points to research indicating that schools and teachers sometimes lack the competencies to deal with both migrant children and special education, and that schools have problems establishing close collaboration with parents. The research argues that an essential problem in assessing students for special-needs education is to distinguish between children who have a need for linguistic support and children who have special-education needs (OECD 2009b).

All the Nordic countries are relatively new immigrant-countries, and the perceptions of diversity and integration have changed during the past decades. In a brief migration policy overview on Norway, Cooper (2005) identifies how all Norwegian White papers since the 1970s have emphasised a respect for immigrants' language and culture, while a focus on immigrants' duty to participate and learn the Norwegian language has also increased and strengthened during that period (Cooper 2005, 5). Equal tendencies are in various degrees identifiable in the other Nordic countries. In Denmark, however, the discourse on in-

tegration and participation based on Danish cultural tradition and language stand strongest.

The Finnish education system embraces multi-cultural discourse to the highest degree by officially setting goals to accommodate students' linguistic, ethnic and cultural diversity; for example, with the youth policy programme (2006) that focuses on diversity, children's right to their own culture and language, global responsibility and tolerance, cultural identity and internationality. All Nordic countries have policies to act against discrimination of any kind.

Adaptability of education: Key policy measures in the Nordic countries				
	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden
<b>Special needs</b>	<i>Inclusive schooling</i> 2012: increased mainstreaming	<i>Inclusive schooling</i> 2009: personal study plans improving education for illiterate immigrant students	<i>Inclusive schooling</i>	<i>Inclusive schooling</i>
<b>Diversity sensitivity</b>		2006: governmental programme with focus on diversity, children's right to own culture and language, global responsibility and tolerance, cultural identity and internationality	2011: budget for/funding the development of multicultural issues in education 2016: Competence for Diversity (Strategy initiative)	1979: amendment to Swedish constitution to encourage immigrants to maintain and develop their ethnic identity, language and religion 1985: school system based on non-discriminatory principles
<b>Social inclusion and anti-discrimination</b>	2003: Act on Ethnic Equal Treatment 2010: action plan to counter prejudice and discrimination	2012-15: programme focusing on anti-discrimination and social inclusion in youth policy (MEC 2012)	2002: Action Plan Against Racism and Discrimination 2007-2009: equal education in practice (National Strategy Plan) 2015: measures to prevent social exclusion	1985: all school activities adhere to democratic principles and counter-act any marginalising behaviour 2006: Act Prohibiting Discrimination and other Degrading Treatment of Children and Students





## 5. Conclusions

This report has compared the Nordic countries' education policies through the perspective of children's right to education, which turn attention to different aspects of the countries' education policies pertaining to immigrant education allowing focus on the four dimensions of availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability. The report focuses on government policies; however, all the Nordic countries have highly decentralised school systems where municipal authorities are responsible for the planning, organising and administration of education. Therefore, much policy on migrant education and reception/integration of refugees is locally developed and managed.

While the Nordic countries as welfare states pose similar conditions for educational policies, and have similar migration histories as new countries to immigration, the four countries differ in numbers of immigrants, including recently arrived asylum-seekers and refugees (see appendix A). These differences may contribute to the variations in immigrants' school performance levels; however, it is beyond the scope of this report to draw conclusions on overall best policy practices within the Nordic countries. Developing high quality education for migrants is complex and influenced by many factors. A dominant discourse in Nordic countries has been an increased neo-liberal approach to education focusing on increased goal management, decentralisation and external quality control to manage schools. From 2000, academic emphasis was placed on instrumental competencies induced by the publication of PISA test results that indicated that variation between language minority students and majority student seemed to be among the greatest in the OECD countries (Engen 2010, 173). Hence, educational policies have increasingly focused on immigrant students as low performers. Assessment and monitoring of immigrant education in the Nordic countries is carried out by comparative measures on performance, participation, access and school wellbeing. However, evidence-based knowledge remains limited on the performance of immigrant students, considering different categories of immigrants, including asylum seekers and refugees (accompanied and unaccompanied children).

Among the Nordic countries, Norway has the lowest performance gaps between non-immigrants and immigrants, and among second-generation immigrants the performance difference went down 15 score points from 2006 to 2015. In Denmark,

we see the largest reduction in the performance gap from 2006 to 2015 between non-immigrants and first- and second-generation immigrants – 20 and 16 score points, resulting in an equal performance level between first- and second-generation immigrants. While the 2006 performance gap between non-immigrants and second-generation immigrants in Sweden was the lowest among Nordic countries, Sweden, opposite to the other countries, witnessed an increase in the performance gap in 2015.

Results from PISA show that, in most OECD countries, first-generation immigrant students perform worse than students without an immigrant background, and second-generation students perform somewhere between the two. Nevertheless, an OECD Review of Migrant Education (2015a) indicates that the recent increase in the share of immigrant students did not lead to a decline in the education standards in host communities. Moreover, although immigrant students tend to *underperform* compared to non-migrants, for many immigrant students, performance is high by international standards. New evidence shows that their performance is related to both the country of origin and the host country. Thus, host countries need to find ways to overcome language barriers and nurture the talents of students with different cultural backgrounds (OECD 2017). Thus, the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows no relationship between the share of immigrant students in a school system and the performance of that system. The report hereby suggests that although immigrants often endure economic hardship and precarious living conditions, many

immigrants bring to their host countries valuable skills and human capital. Also, this finding indicates that many educational systems carry out valuable measures to ensure the education of immigrant students. Another significant finding of the OECD report is that even if the culture and the education acquired before migrating have an impact on student performance, the country where immigrant students settle matters more. This is illustrated through the significant performance difference between migrant students with the same national origin residing in different host countries (OECD 2015a, 30).



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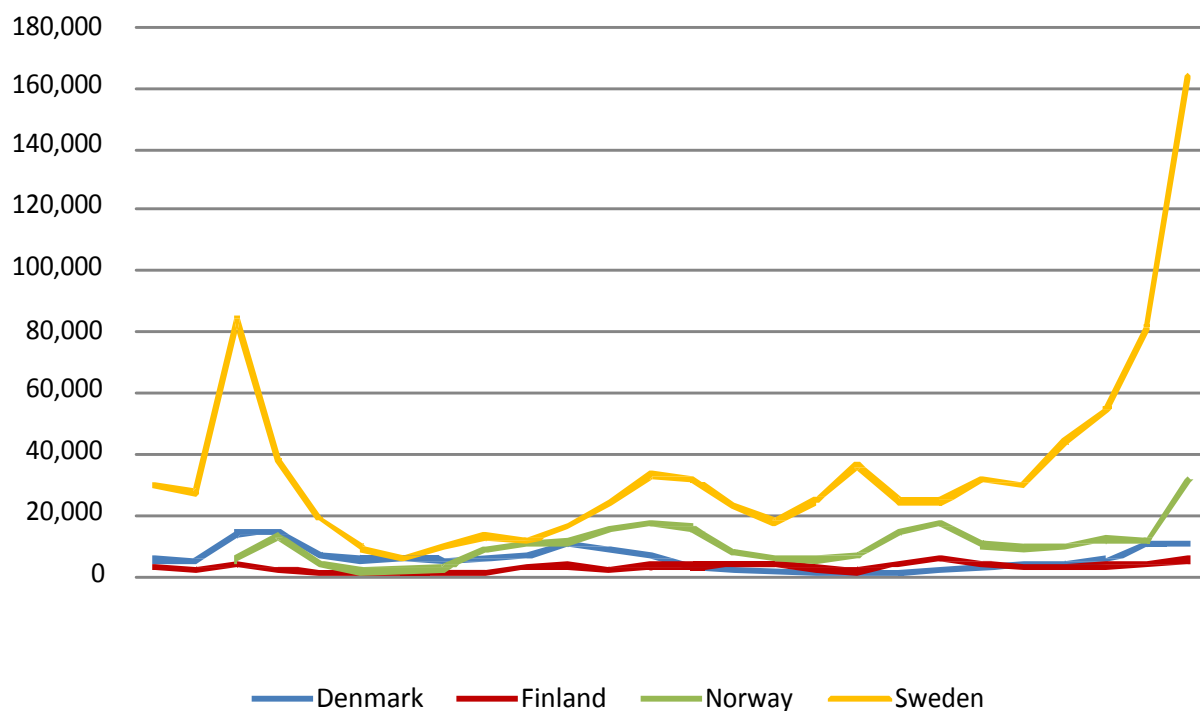
23 Meld. St. (Stortingsmelding = Report to the Storting / White paper)



## 7. Appendix

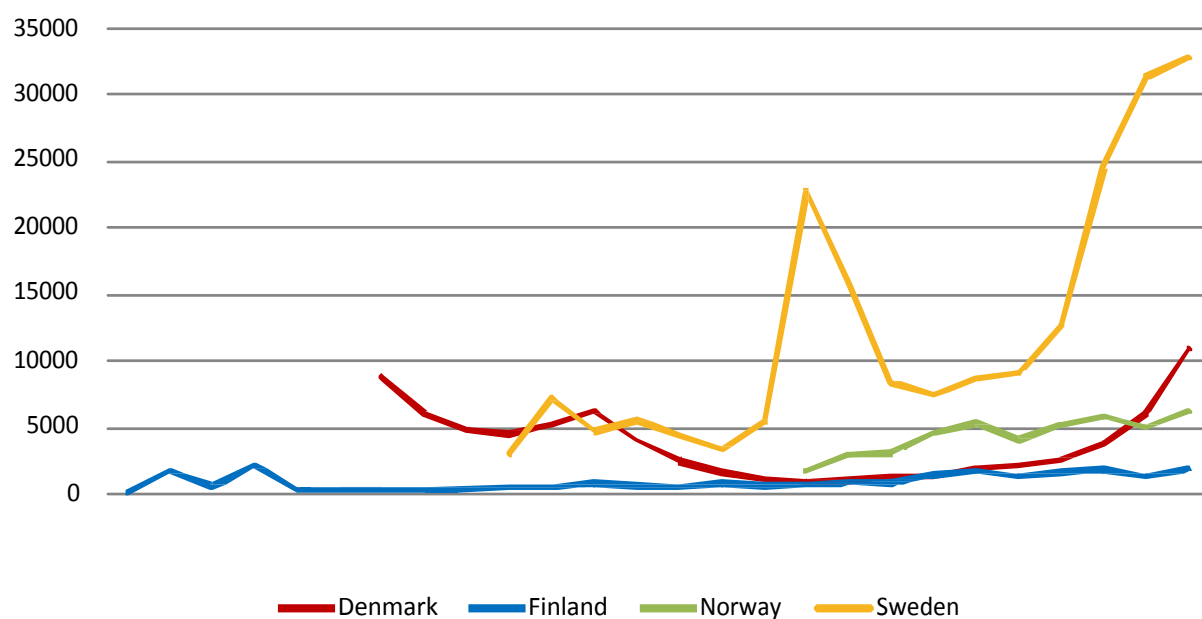
### Appendix A – refugee influx to Nordic countries

Fig 1 Asylum applications in the Nordic countries (1990-2015).



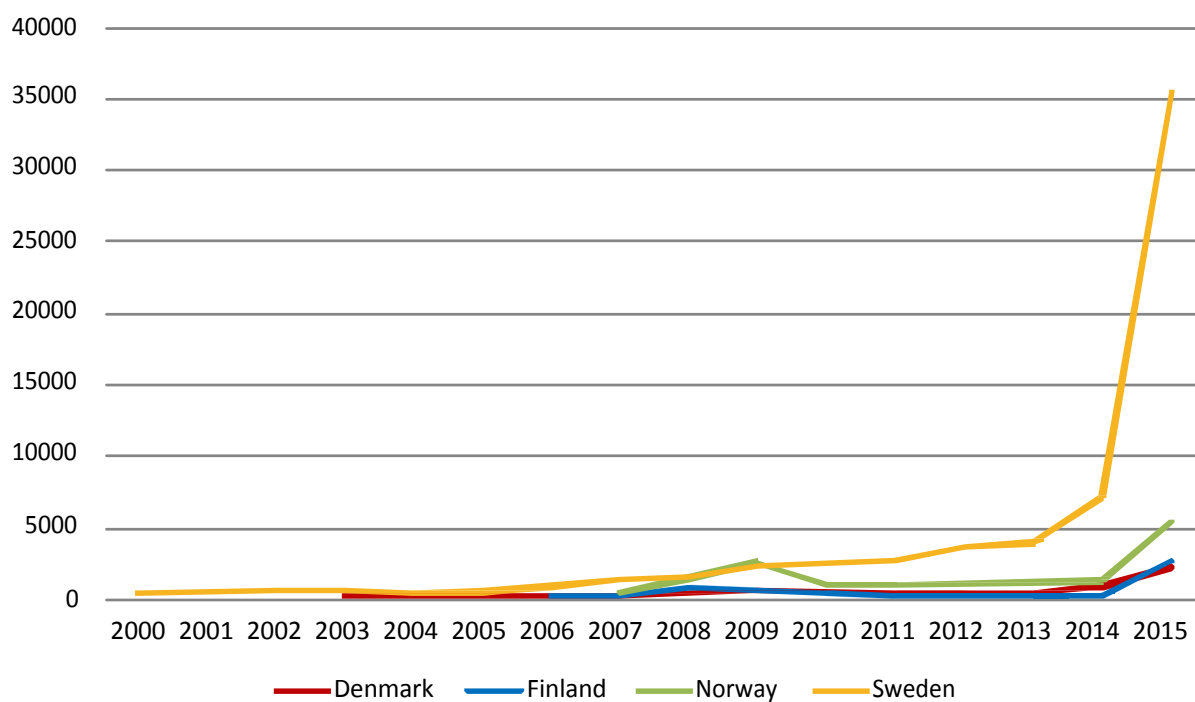
(Nordic Council, 2016a / Gauffin and Lyytinen 2017.)

Fig 2 Granted asylum requests (not including family reunification).



(Nordic Council, 2016a / Gauffin and Lyytinen 2017.)

Fig 3 Asylum applications by unaccompanied minors.



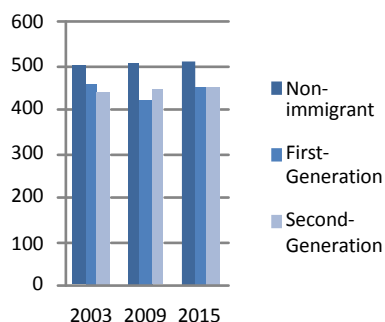
(Nordic Council 2016b / Gauffin and Lyytinen 2017.)



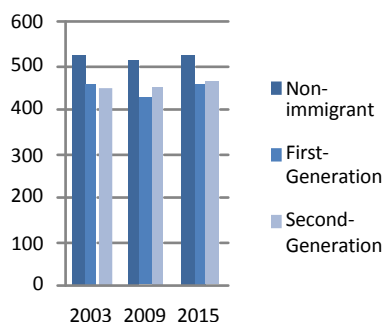
## Appendix B – PISA performance score over time in Nordic countries and OECD average

### DENMARK

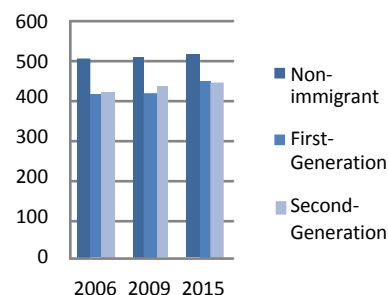
Average PISA scores in Reading in Denmark at the age of 15, 2003-2015



Average PISA scores in Mathematics in Denmark at the age of 15, 2003-2015

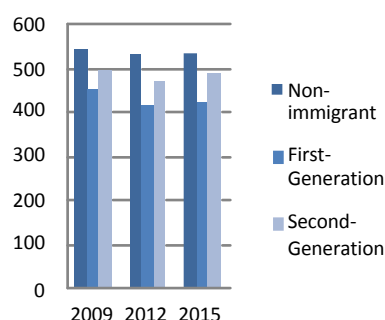


Average PISA scores in Science in Denmark at the age of 15, 2006-2015

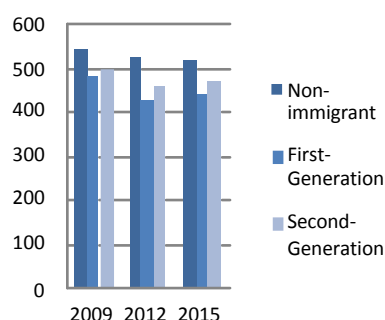


### FINLAND

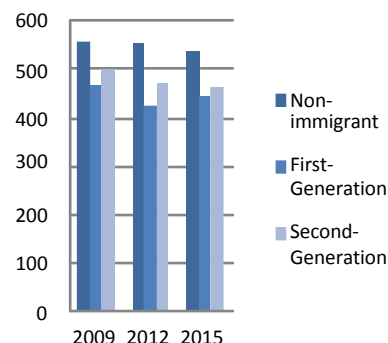
Average PISA scores in Reading in Finland at the age of 15, 2009-2015



Average PISA scores in Mathematics in Finland at the age of 15, 2009-2015

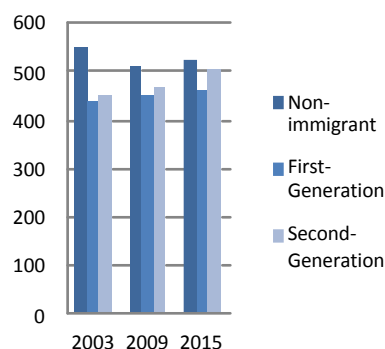


Average PISA scores in Science in Finland at the age of 15, 2009-2015

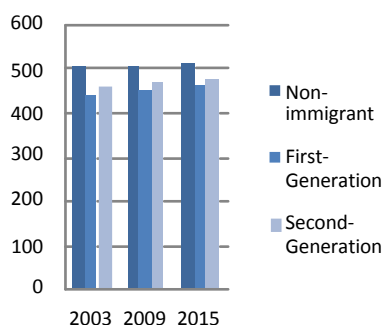


### NORWAY

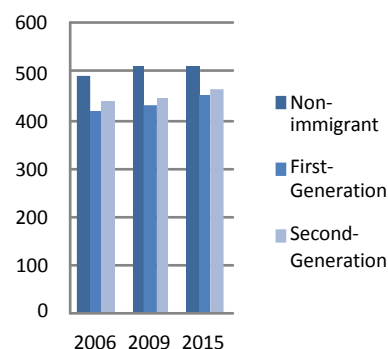
Average PISA scores in Reading in Norway at the age of 15, 2003-2015



Average PISA scores in Mathematics in Norway at the age of 15, 2003-2015

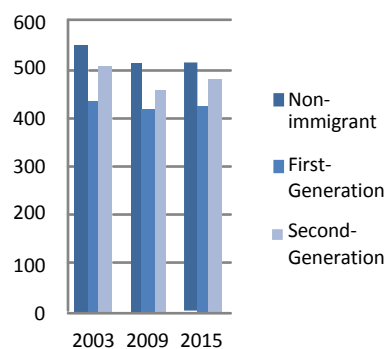


Average PISA scores in Science in Norway at the age of 15, 2006-2015

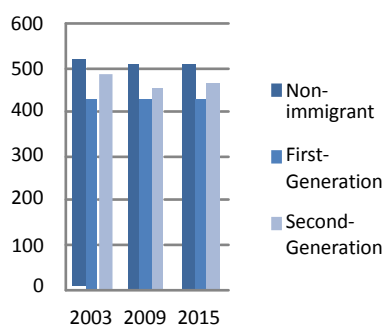


## SWEDEN

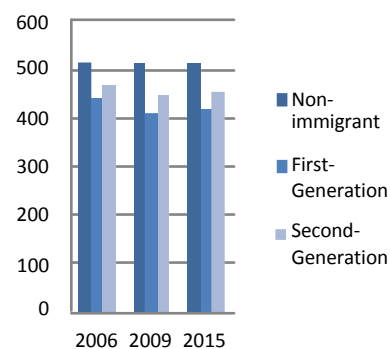
Average PISA scores in Reading in Sweden at the age of 15, 2003-2015



Average PISA scores in Mathematics in Sweden at the age of 15, 2003-2015

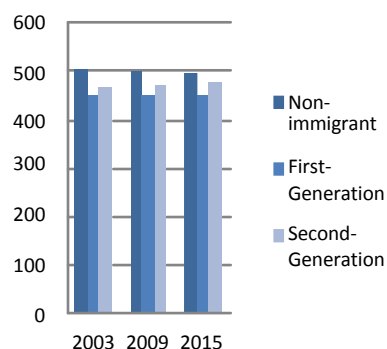


Average PISA scores in Science in Sweden at the age of 15, 2006-2015

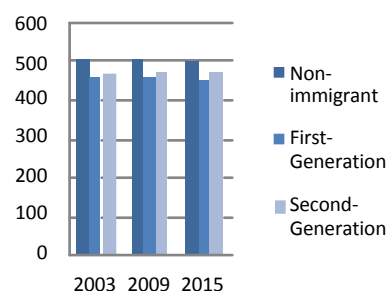


## OECD

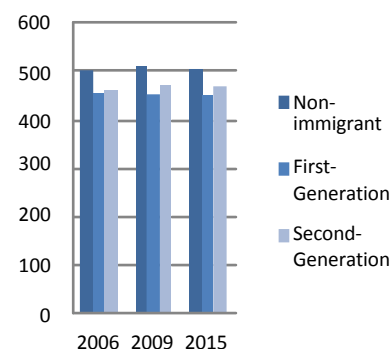
OECD Average PISA scores in Reading at the age of 15, 2003-2015



OECD Average PISA scores in Mathematics at the age of 15, 2003-2015



OECD Average PISA scores in Science at the age of 15, 2006-2015



Basic table: PISA Score in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and OECD average in reading, mathematics and science for non-immigrant, first-generation immigrants and second-generation immigrants from 2003 to 2015 (Finland not available 2003)

	READING			MATHEMATICS			SCIENCE		
	Non-imm.	1st gen.	2nd gen.	Non-imm.	1st gen.	2nd gen.	Non-imm.	1st gen.	2nd gen.
2015	507	449	448	519	457	459	510	441	441
2012	504	427	454	508	428	447	508	418	433
2009	502	422	446	510	426	447	508	415	430
2006	500	422	436	519	439	456	503	414	418
2003	497	454	440	520	455	449	-	-	-
2015	531	419	484	514	438	466	535	443	464
2012	529	413	465	523	425	453	551	425	470
2009	538	449	493	542	479	498	556	463	494
2006	549	491	-	550	470	-	566	466	-
2003	546	454	-	546	474	-	-	-	-
2015	521	458	500	509	459	473	507	446	464
2012	512	444	481	496	440	457	504	426	444
2009	508	447	463	502	445	463	505	432	443
2006	549	427	449	495	437	446	493	414	435
2003	546	436	446	499	438	460	-	-	-
2015	514	423	477	506	428	461	508	417	454
2012	496	400	457	490	410	445	499	402	445
2009	507	416	454	504	428	447	506	408	440
2006	514	446	486	510	446	467	512	434	464
2003	546	433	502	517	425	483	-	-	-
2015	499	445	476	496	450	471	500	447	469
2012	502	450	476	499	452	469	508	452	472
2009	499	448	467	501	455	466	507	454	468
2006	494	442	454	499	457	460	504	453	459
2003	500	448	464	505	454	466	-	-	-

(PISA International Data Explorer: <http://piaacdataexplorer.oecd.org/ide/idepisa>)







## About the project Coming of Age in Exile (CAGE)

CAGE is a research project based on collaboration between five leading research institutions in the Nordic countries; the Danish Research Centre for Migration, Ethnicity and Health, University of Copenhagen, Denmark; Migration Institute of Finland, Finland; Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies and University College of Southeast Norway, Norway; and Centre for Health Equity Studies, Stockholm University and University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

CAGE brings together a pan-Nordic, multidisciplinary team of leading scholars and research students to shed light on some of our time's most pressing social challenges related to the societal integration of young refugees. CAGE will provide analyses and insights to inform policy and practice related to health, education and employment among young refugees arriving in the Nordic countries and beyond. CAGE is funded by the Nordic Research Council (NordForsk).

CAGE was developed within the "Nordic Network for Research on Refugee Children" and its sister network "Nordic Network for Research Cooperation on Unaccompanied Refugee Minors".

This report is the first in a series of 3 CAGE policy reports. The second report is focusing on education policies and the third report on health reception policies regarding refugee children and adolescents.

You can read more about CAGE at:  
[www.cage.ku.dk](http://www.cage.ku.dk)



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AND TRAUMATIC STRESS STUDIES**

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Centre for Health  
Equity Studies



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OF FINLAND



**NordForsk**